

THE
P O E M S
OF
MR G R A Y.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED
M E M O I R S
OF HIS
L I F E and W R I T I N G S

BY
W. MASON, M.A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

Y O R K:

PRINTED BY A. WARD; AND SOLD BY J. DODS-
LEY, PALL-MALL; T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND,
LONDON; AND J. TODD, YORK,

MDCCLXXVIII.



M E M O I R S

O F T H E

L I F E and W R I T I N G S

O F

M^R G R A Y.

V O L. III.

C O N T A I N I N G

The THIRD and first part of the FOURTH
SECTION of the MEMOIRS.

EST ADHUC HOMINIBUS ET CURA ET OFFICIUM:
SUNT QUI DEFUNCTORUM QUOQUE AMICOS AGANT.
PLINII EPIST.



C O N T E N T S

OF THE

M E M O I R S.

S E C T I O N III.

Page

PREFATORY narrative.—Mr. Gray's father dies, and the year after he returns to Cambridge, and takes a degree in Civil Law; during that interval he corresponds with Mr. West. 1 to 5

- LETTER I.** From Mr. WEST.—His spirits not as yet improved by country air.—Has begun to read Tacitus, but does not relish him. — — 5
2. To Mr. WEST.—Earnest hopes for his friend's better health, as the warm weather comes on.—Defence of Tacitus, and his character.—Of the new Dunciad.—

vi CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS.

	Page
Sends him a speech from the first scene of his Agrippina. ———	6
The Plan, Dramatis Personæ, and all the speeches which Mr. Gray wrote of that Tragedy inserted. ——— —	10
LETTER 3. From Mr. West.—Criticism on his friend's tragic style.—Latin Hexameters on his own cough. ———	23
4. To Mr. WEST.—Thanks for his verses.—On Joseph Andrews.—Defence of old words in Tragedy.	25
5. From Mr. WEST.—Answer to the former, on the subject of antiquated expressions. ——— —	31
6. To Mr. WEST.—Has laid aside his Tragedy.—Difficulty of translating Tacitus. ——— —	35
7. From Mr. WEST.—With an English Ode on the approach of May.	37
8. To Mr. WEST.—Criticises his Ode. Of his own classical studies. ———	40
LETTER	

CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS. vii

	Page
LETTER 9. From Mr. WEST.—Answer to the foregoing. ——— ———	42
10. To Mr. WEST.—Of his own pecu- liar species of melancholy.—In- scription for a wood in Greek Hex- ameters.—Argument and exordi- um of a Latin Heroic Epistle from Sophonisba to Massinissa. ———	43

Account of Mr. WEST's death.—Of Mr.
Gray's English Poetry, written about this
time, with the general plan, argument of
the first book, and all the parts which the
Author finished of a Latin Didactic Poem
“De Principiis Cogitandi.” ——— 49 to 67

SECTION IV.

Prefatory narrative.—Mr. Gray takes his de-
gree in Civil Law, and makes Cambridge
his principal residence for the rest of his
life.—The Editor of these Memoirs be-
comes acquainted with him in the year
1747.—He corresponds with Dr. Wharton

viii CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS.

Page

and several other persons till the year 1768,
when he is appointed Professor of Modern
History. ——— 67

LETTER I. TO DR. WHARTON, on taking his
degree of Batchelor of Civil Law. 72

Fragment of an Hymn to Ignorance. 75

2. TO DR. WHARTON.—Ridicule on
Univerfity lazinefs. — Of Dr.
Akenfide's Poem on the Pleafures
of Imagination. ——— 77

3. TO DR. WHARTON.—His amufe-
ments in Town.—Reflections on
riches.—Character of Aristotle. 80

4. TO MR. WALPOLE.—Ridicule on
Cibber's Observations on Cicero.—
On the modern Platonic Dialogue.
Account of his own and Mr. Weft's
poetical compositions. ——— 83

5. TO MR. WALPOLE.—Criticifms on
Mr. Spence's Polymetis. ——— 87

LETTER

CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS. ix

	Page
LETTER 6. To Mr. WALPOLE.—Ludicrous compliment of condolence on the death of his favourite Cat, inclo- sing his Ode on that subject. —	91
7. To Dr. WHARTON.—Loss by fire of a house in Cornhill.—On Dio- dorus Siculus.—M. Gresset's Po- ems.—Thomson's Castle of Indo- lence.—Ode to a Water-Nymph, with a character of its Author.	93
8. To Dr. WHARTON.—More on M. Gresset.—Account of his own pro- jected Poem on the alliance be- tween government and education.	96

Fragment of that Poem, with a com-
mentary, notes, and detached sen-
timents relative to it. — 99 to III

9. To Dr. WHARTON.—Character of M. de Montesquieu's <i>L'Esprit des</i> <i>Loix.</i> — — — — —	III
	LETTER

x CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS.

	Page
LETTER 10. To Dr. WHARTON.—Account of books continued.--Crebillion's Catalina.—Birch's State Papers.—Of his own studies, and a table of Greek Chronology, which he was then forming. — — —	116
11. To Dr. WHARTON.—Ludicrous account of the Duke of Newcastle's Installation at Cambridge.—On the Ode then performed, and more concerning the Author of it. —	119
12. To his MOTHER.—Consolatory on the death of her sister. — —	121
13. To Dr. WHARTON.—Wishes to be able to pay him a visit at Durham. On Dr. Middleton's death.—Some account of the first volumes of Buffon's Histoire Naturelle. —	123

Narrative of the incident which led Mr. Gray to write his Long Story.—That Poem inserted, with Notes by the Editor, and prefaced with his idea of Mr. Gray's peculiar vein of humour. — — — 125 to 139

LETTER

CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS. xi

Page

- LETTER 14. To Dr. WHARTON.—On the ill reception which the foregoing Poem met with in town when handed about in manuscript, and how much his Elegy in a Country Church-Yard was applauded. — 139
15. To Mr. WALPOLE.—Desires him to give his Elegy to Mr. Doddsley to be printed immediately, in order to prevent its publication in a magazine. — — — 141
16. To Dr. WHARTON.—Of Madame Maintenon's Character and Letters.—His high opinion of M. Racine.—Of Bishop Hall's Satires, and of a few of Plato's Dialogues. 142
17. To Mr. WALPOLE.—Concerning the intention of publishing Mr. Bentley's designs for his Poems.—Refuses to have his own portrait prefixed to that work. — — — 144

Farther account of those designs, with stanzas which Mr. Gray wrote to Mr. Bentley on that occasion. — — — 147

Epitaph

xii CONTENTS of the MEMOIRS.

Page

Epitaph on Mr. Gray's Aunt and Mother in
the church-yard of Stoke-Pogis. — — 150

LETTER 18. To Mr. MASON.—On the death of
his Father. — — — 151

19. To Dr. WHARTON.—On Strawberry-Hill.—Occasional remarks
on Gothic Architecture. — — 153

20. To Dr. WHARTON.—Objection to
publishing his Ode on the Progress
of Poetry singly.—Hint of his ha-
ving other lyrical ideas by him un-
finished. — — — 155

Explanation of that hint, and a fragment of
one of those lyrical pieces inserted. 157 to 166

20 AU 66

MEMOIRS

M E M O I R S

OF THE

L I F E and W R I T I N G S

O F

Mr. G R A Y.

SECTION THE THIRD.

WHEN Mr. Gray returned from abroad, he found his Father's constitution almost entirely worn out by the very severe attacks of the gout, to which he had been for many years subject; and indeed the next return of that distemper was fatal to him. * This happened about two months after his son reached London.

VOL. III.

A

It

N O T E.

* He came to town about the 1st of September, 1741. His Father died the 6th of November following, at the age of sixty-five.

It has been before observed, that Mr. Philip Gray was of a reserved and indolent temper; he was also morose, unsocial, and obstinate; defects which, if not inherent in his disposition, might probably arise from his bodily complaints. His indolence had led him to neglect the business of † his profession; his obstinacy, to build a country-house at Wanstead, without acquainting either his wife or son with the design (to which he knew they would be very averse) till it was executed. This building, which he undertook late in life, was attended with very considerable expence; which might almost be called so much money thrown away: since, after his death, it was found necessary to sell the house for two thousand pounds less than its original cost. Mr. Gray, therefore, at this time found his patrimony so small,

N O T E.

† His business was that which at the time was called a Money-Scrivener; and it may not be amiss to mention, for the singularity of the thing, that Milton's father was of the same profession: But he also had "Music in his soul," and was esteemed a considerable master in that science. Some of his compositions are extant in Old Wilby's Set of Airs, and in Ravenscroft's Psalms. The great Poet alludes finely both to the musical genius and the trade of his father in those beautiful hexameters, "Ad Patrem," which are inserted amongst his Latin Poems.

small, that it would by no means enable him to prosecute the study of the law, without his becoming burthenfome to his Mother and Aunt. These two sisters had for many years carried on † a trade separate from that of Mrs. Gray's husband ; by which having acquired what would support them decently for the rest of their lives, they left off business soon after his death, and retired to Stoke, near Windsor, to the house of their other Sister, Mrs. Rogers, lately become the widow of a gentleman * of that name. Both of them wished Mr. Gray to follow the profession for which he had been originally intended, and would undoubtedly have contributed all in their power to enable him to do it with ease and conveniency. He on his part, though he had taken his resolution of declining it, was too delicate to hurt two persons for whom he had so tender an affection, by peremptorily declaring his real intentions ; and therefore changed, or pretended to change, the line of

A 2

that

N O T E S.

† They kept a kind of India warehouse on Cornhill under the joint names of Gray and Antrobus.

* Mr. Rogers had in the earlier part of his life followed the profession of the law, but retired from business many years before his death. I suppose he was the uncle mentioned in Letter ix. sect. 1.

that study ; and, accordingly, the latter end of the subsequent year went to Cambridge to take his Bachelor's Degree in Civil Law.

But the narrowness of his circumstances was not the only thing that distressed him at this period. He had, as we have seen, lost the friendship of Mr. Walpole abroad. He had also lost much time in his travels ; a loss which application could not easily retrieve, when so severe and laborious a study as that of the Common Law was to be the object of it ; and he well knew that, whatever improvement he might have made in this interval, either in taste or science, such improvement would stand him in little stead with regard to his present situation and exigencies. This was not all : His other friend, Mr. West, he found, on his return, oppressed by sickness and a load of family misfortunes ; which, were I fully acquainted with them, it would not be my inclination here to dwell upon. These the sympathizing heart of Mr. Gray made his own. He did all in his power (for he was now with him in London) to soothe the sorrows of his friend, and to try to alleviate them by every office of the purest and most perfect affection : But his cares were vain. The distresses of Mr. West's mind had already too far affected a body, from the first,
weak

weak and delicate. His health declined daily, and, therefore, he left Town in March 1742, and, for the benefit of the air, went to David Mitchell's, Esq; at Popes, near Hatfield, Hertfordshire; at whose house he died the 1st of June following.

It is from this place, and from the former date, that this third series of letters commences.

L E T T E R I.*

Mr. W E S T to Mr. G R A Y.

I Write to make you write, for I have not much to tell you. I have recovered no spirits as yet; but, as I am not displeased with my company, I sit purring by the fire-side in my arm-chair with no small satisfaction. I read too sometimes, and have begun Tacitus, but have not yet read enough to judge of him; only his Pannonian sedition in the first book of his annals, which is just as far as I have got, seemed to me a little tedious. I have no more to say, but to desire you will
write

N O T E.

* This letter is inserted as introductory only to the answer which follows.

write letters of a handsome length, and always answer me within a reasonable space of time, which I leave to your discretion.

Popes, March 28, 1742.

P. S. The new Dunciad ! qu'en pensez vous ?

L E T T E R II.

Mr. G^R A Y to Mr. W E S T.

I Trust to the country, and that easy indolence you say you enjoy there, to restore you your health and spirits ; and doubt not but, when the sun grows warm enough to tempt you from your fire-side, you will (like all other things) be the better for his influence. He is my old friend, and an excellent nurse, I assure you. Had it not been for him, life had often been to me intolerable. Pray do not imagine that Tacitus, of all authors in the world, can be tedious. An annalist, you know, is by no means master of his subject ; and I think one may venture to say, that if those Pannonian affairs are tedious in his hands, in another's they would have been insupportable. However, fear not, they will soon be over, and he will make ample amends. A man, who could join the *brilliant* of wit and concise sententiousness

ness peculiar to that age, with the truth and gravity of better times, and the deep reflection and good sense of the best moderns, cannot choose but have something to strike you. Yet what I admire in him above all this, is his detestation of tyranny, and the high spirit of liberty that every now and then breaks out, as it were, whether he would or no. I remember a sentence in his *Agricola* that (concise as it is) I always admired for saying much in a little compass. He speaks of Domitian, who upon seeing the last will of that General, where he had made him Coheir with his Wife and Daughter, “*Satis constabat lætatum eum, velut honore, judicioque: tam cæca & corrupta mens assiduis adulationibus erat, ut nesciret a bono patre non scribi hæredem, nisi malum principem.*”

As to the *Dunciad*, it is greatly admired: The Genii of Operas and Schools, with their attendants, the pleasures of the Virtuofos and Florists, and the yawn of dullness in the end, are as fine as any thing he has written. The Metaphysicians’ part is to me the worst; and here and there a few ill-expressed lines, and some hardly intelligible.

I take the liberty of sending you a long speech of Agrippina; much too long, but I could be glad you would

would retrench it. *Aceronia*, you may remember, had been giving quiet counsels. I fancy, if it ever be finished, it will be in the nature of *Nat. Lee's Bedlam Tragedy*, which had twenty-five acts and some odd scenes.

The speech herewith sent to Mr. West was the concluding one of the first scene of a tragedy, which I believe was begun the preceding winter. The *Britannicus* of Mr. Racine, I know was one of Mr. Gray's most favourite plays; and the admirable manner in which I have heard him say that he saw it represented at Paris *, seems to have led him to choose the death of *Agrippina* for this his first and only effort in the drama. The execution of it also, as far as it goes, is so very much in Racine's taste, that I suspect, if that great poet had been born an Englishman, he would have written precisely in the same style and manner. However, as there is at present in this nation a general prejudice against declamatory plays, I agree with a learned friend, who perused the manuscript, that this fragment will be little relished by the many; yet the admirable strokes of nature and character with which it abounds, and the majesty of its diction,

N O T E.

* By Mademoiselle Dumesnil.

diction, prevent me from withholding from the few,
 who I expect will relish it, so great a curiosity (to call
 it nothing more) as part of a tragedy written by Mr.
 Gray. These persons well know, that till style and
 sentiment be a little more regarded, mere action and pas-
 sion will never secure reputation to the Author, what-
 ever they may do to the Actor. It is the business of the
 one "to strut and fret his hour upon the stage;" and
 if he frets and struts enough, he is sure to find his reward
 in the plaudit of an upper gallery; but the other ought
 to have some regard to the cooler judgment of the clo-
 set: For I will be bold to say, that if Shakespear him-
 self had not written a multitude of passages which please
 there as much as they do on the stage, his reputation
 would not stand so universally high as it does at present.
 Many of these passages, to the shame of our theatrical
 taste, are omitted constantly in the representation: But
 I say not this from conviction that the mode of writing,
 which Mr. Gray pursued, is the best for dramatic pur-
 poses. I think myself, what I have asserted elsewhere *,
 that a medium between the French and English taste
 would be preferable to either; and yet this medium, if
 hit with the greatest nicety, would fail of success on our
 theatre,

N O T E.

- * See Letters prefixt to *Elfrida*, particularly Letter II.

theatre, and that for a very obvious reason. Actors (I speak of the troop collectively) must all learn to speak as well as act, in order to do justice to such a drama.

But let me hasten to give the reader what little insight I can into Mr. Gray's plan, as I find, and select it from two detached papers. The Title and Dramatis Personæ are as follow :

AGRIPPINA, a TRAGEDY,

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AGRIPPINA, the Empress mother.

NERO, the Emperor.

POPPÆA, believed to be in love with OTHO.

OTHO, a young man of quality, in love with POPPÆA.

SENECA, the Emperor's preceptor.

ANICETUS, Captain of the guards.

DEMETRIUS, the Cynic, friend to SENECA.

ACERONIA, Confidant to AGRIPPINA.

SCENE, the Emperor's villa at BAÏÆ.

The argument drawn out by him, in these two papers, under the idea of a plot and under-plot, I shall
here

here unite ; as it will tend to show that the action itself was possess of sufficient unity.

The drama opens with the indignation of Agrippina, at receiving her son's orders from Anicetus to remove from Baïæ, and to have her guard taken from her. At this time Otho having conveyed Poppæa from the house of her husband Rufus Crispinus, brings her to Baïæ, where he means to conceal her among the croud ; or, if his fraud is discovered, to have recourse to the Emperor's authority ; but, knowing the lawless temper of Nero, he determines not to have recourse to that expedient, but on the utmost necessity. In the mean time he commits her to the care of Anicetus, whom he takes to be his friend, and in whose age he thinks he may safely confide. Nero is not yet come to Baïæ ; but Seneca, whom he sends before him, informs Agrippina of the accusation concerning Rubellius Plancus, and desires her to clear herself, which she does briefly ; but demands to see her son, who, on his arrival, acquits her of all suspicion, and restores her to her honours. In the mean while Anicetus, to whose care Poppæa had been entrusted by Otho, contrives the following plot to ruin Agrippina : He betrays his trust to Otho, and brings Nero, as it were by chance, to the sight of the beautiful

beautiful Poppæa; the Emperor is immediately struck with her charms, and she, by a feigned resistance, increases his passion; tho', in reality, she is from the first dazzled with the prospect of empire, and forgets Otho: She therefore joins with Anicetus in his design of ruining Agrippina, soon perceiving that it will be for her interest. Otho hearing that the Emperor had seen Poppæa, is much enraged; but not knowing that this interview was obtained thro' the treachery of Anicetus, is readily persuaded by him to see Agrippina in secret, and acquaint her with his fears that her son Nero would marry Poppæa. Agrippina, to support her own power, and to wean the Emperor from the love of Poppæa, gives Otho encouragement, and promises to support him. Anicetus secretly introduces Nero to hear their discourse; who resolves immediately on his mother's death, and, by Anicetus's means, to destroy her by drowning. A solemn feast, in honour of their reconciliation, is to be made; after which she being to go by sea to Bauli, the ship is so contrived as to sink or crush her; she escapes by accident, and returns to Baiæ. In this interval, Otho has an interview with Poppæa; and being duped a second time by Anicetus and her, determines to fly with her into Greece, by means of a vessel which is to be furnished by Anicetus; but he, pretend-

ing

ing to remove Poppæa on board in the night, conveys her to Nero's apartment: She there encourages and determines Nero to banish Otho, and finish the horrid deed he had attempted on his mother. Anicetus undertakes to execute his resolves; and, under pretence of a plot upon the Emperor's life, is sent with a guard to murder Agrippina, who is still at Baiæ in imminent fear, and irresolute how to conduct herself. The account of her death, and the Emperor's horror and fruitless remorse, finishes the drama.

I refer the reader to the 13th and 14th books of the annals of Tacitus for the facts on which this story is founded: By turning to that author, he will easily see how far the poet thought it necessary to deviate from the truth of history. I shall only further observe, that as such a fable could not possibly admit of any good character, it is terror only and not pity that could be excited by this tragedy, had it been completed. Yet it was surely capable of exciting this passion in a supreme degree: if, what the critics tell us be true, that crimes, which illustrious persons commit, affect us from the very circumstance of their rank, because we unite with that our fears for the public weal.

A C T

ACT I. SCENE I.

AGRIPPINA, ACERONIA.

AGRIPPINA.

TIS well, begone ! your errand is perform'd :

[Speaks as to Anicetus entering.]

The message needs no comment. Tell your master,
 His mother shall obey him. Say you saw her
 Yielding due reverence to his high command :
 Alone, unguarded, and without a Licor,
 As fits the daughter of Germanicus.
 Say, she retired to Antium ; there to tend
 Her household cares, a woman's best employment.
 What if you add, how she turn'd pale, and trembled ;
 You think, you spied a tear stand in her eye,
 And would have drop'd, but that her pride restrain'd it ?
 (Go ! you can paint it well) 'twill profit you,
 And please the stripling. Yet 'twould dash his joy
 To hear the spirit of Britannicus
 Yet walks on earth ; at least there are who know
 Without a spell to raise, and bid it fire
 A thousand haughty hearts, unus'd to shake
 When a boy frowns, nor to be lur'd with smiles
 To taste of hollow kindness, or partake

His

His hospitable board : They are aware
Of th' unpledg'd bowl, they love not Aconite.

A C E R O N I A.

He's gone ; and much I hope these walls alone,
And the mute air are privy to your passion.
Forgive your servant's fears, who sees the danger
Which fierce resentment cannot fail to raise
In haughty youth, and irritated power.

A G R I P P I N A.

And dost thou talk to me, to me, of danger,
Of haughty youth, and irritated power,
To her that gave it being, her that arm'd
This painted Jove, and taught his novice hand
To aim the forked bolt ; while he stood trembling
Scar'd at the sound, and dazzled with its brightness ?

'Tis like, thou hast forgot, when yet a stranger
To adoration, to the grateful steam
Of flattery's incense, and obsequious vows
From voluntary realms, a puny boy,
Deck'd with no other lustre, than the blood
Of Agrippina's race, he liv'd unknown
To fame, or fortune ; haply eyed at distance
Some edileship, ambitious of the power
To judge of weights, and measures ; scarcely dar'd
On expectation's strongest wing to soar

High

High as the consulate, that empty shade
 Of long-forgotten liberty : When I
 Oped his young eye to bear the blaze of greatness ;
 Shew'd him, where empire tower'd, and bad him strike
 The noble quarry. Gods ! then was the time
 To shrink from danger ; fear might then have worn
 The mask of prudence : but a heart like mine,
 A heart that glows with the pure Julian fire,
 If bright Ambition from her craggy feat
 Display the radiant prize, will mount undaunted,
 Gain the rough heights, and grasp the dangerous honour.

A C E R O N I A.

Thro' various life I have pursued your steps,
 Have seen your soul, and wonder'd at its daring :
 Hence rise my fears. Nor am I yet to learn
 How vast the debt of gratitude, which Nero
 To such a mother owes ; the world, you gave him,
 Suffices not to pay the obligation.

I well remember too (for I was present)
 When in a secret and dead hour of night,
 Due sacrifice perform'd with barb'rous rites
 Of mutter'd charms, and solemn invocation,
 You bad the Magi call the dreadful powers,
 That read futurity, to know the fate
 Impending o'er your son : Their answer was,

If

If the son reign, the mother perishes.
 Perish (you cry'd) the mother ! reign the son !
 He reigns, the rest is heav'n's ; who oft has bad,
 Ev'n when its will seem'd wrote in lines of blood,
 Th' unthought event disclose a whiter meaning.
 Think too how oft in weak and sickly minds
 The sweets of kindness lavishly indulg'd
 Rankle to gall ; and benefits too great
 To be repaid, sit heavy on the soul,
 As unrequited wrongs. The willing homage
 Of prostrate Rome, the senate's joint applause,
 The riches of the earth, the train of pleasures,
 That wait on youth, and arbitrary sway ;
 These were your gift, and with them you bestow'd
 The very power he has to be ungrateful.

A G R I P P I N A.

Thus ever grave, and undisturb'd reflection
 Pours its cool dictates in the madding ear
 Of rage, and thinks to quench the fire it feels not.
 Say'st thou I must be cautious, must be silent,
 And tremble at the phantom I have raised ?
 Carry to him thy timid counsels. He
 Perchance may heed 'em : Tell him too, that one,
 Who had such liberal power to give, may still
 With equal power resume that gift, and raise

A tempest, that shall shake her own creation
 To its original atoms—tell me! say
 This mighty Emperor, this dreaded Hero,
 Has he beheld the glittering front of war?
 Knows his soft ear the Trumpet's thrilling voice,
 And outcry of the battle? Have his limbs
 Sweat under iron harness? Is he not
 The silken son of dalliance, nurs'd in Ease
 And Pleasure's flowery lap?—Rubellius lives,
 And Sylla has his friends, tho' school'd by fear
 To bow the supple knee, and court the times
 With shows of fair obeisance; and a call,
 Like mine, might serve belike to wake pretensions
 Drowzier than theirs, who boast the genuine blood
 Of our imperial house.

A C E R O N I A.

Did I not wish to check this dangerous passion,
 I might remind my mistress that her nod
 Can rouse eight hardy legions, wont to stem
 With stubborn nerves the tide, and face the rigour
 Of bleak Germania's snows. Four, not less brave,
 That in Armenia quell the Parthian force
 Under the warlike Corbulo, by you
 Mark'd for their leader: These, by ties confirm'd,
 Of old respect and gratitude, are yours.

Surely

Surely the Masians too, and those of Egypt,
 Have not forgot your fire : The eye of Rome
 And the Prætorian camp have long rever'd,
 With custom'd awe, the daughter, sister, wife,
 And mother of their Cæsars.

A G R I P P I N A.

Ha ! by Juno,
 It bears a noble semblance. On this base
 My great revenge shall rise ; or say we found
 The trump of liberty ; there will not want,
 Even in the servile senate, ears to own
 Her spirit-stirring voice ; Soranus there,
 And Cassius ; Vetus too, and Thrasea,
 Minds of the antique cast, rough, stubborn souls,
 That struggle with the yoke. How shall the spark
 Unquenchable, that glows within their breasts,
 Blaze into freedom, when the idle herd
 (Slaves from the womb, created but to stare,
 And bellow in the Circus) yet will start,
 And shake 'em at the name of liberty,
 Stung by a senseless word, a vain tradition,
 As there were magic in it ? wrinkled beldams
 Teach it their grandchildren, as somewhat rare
 That anciently appear'd, but when, extends
 Beyond their chronicle—oh ! 'tis a cause

To arm the hand of childhood, and rebrace
The slacken'd sinews of time-wearied age.

Yes, we may meet, ingrateful boy, we may !
Again the buried genius of old Rome
Shall from the dust uprear his reverend head,
Rous'd by the shout of millions : There before
His high tribunal thou and I appear.
Let majesty sit on thy awful brow,
And lighten from thy eye : Around thee call
The gilded swarm that wantons in the sunshine
Of thy full favour ; Seneca be there
In gorgeous phrase of labour'd eloquence
To dress thy plea, and Burrhus strengthen it
With his plain soldier's oath, and honest seeming.
Against thee, liberty and Agrippina :
The world, the prize ; and fair befall the victors.

But soft ! why do I waste the fruitless hours
In threats unexecuted ? Haste thee, fly
These hated walls, that seem to mock my shame,
And cast me forth in duty to their lord.

A C E R O N I A.

'Tis time we go, the sun is high advanc'd,
And, ere mid-day, Nero will come to Baia.

A G R I P P I N A.

My thought aches at him ; not the basilisk

More

More deadly to the fight, than is to me
The cool injurious eye of frozen kindness.
I will not meet its poison. Let him feel
Before he fees me.

A C E R O N I A.

Why then stays my sovereign,
Where he so soon may——

A G R I P P I N A.

Yes, I will be gone,
But not to Antium—all shall be confess'd,
Whate'er the frivolous tongue of giddy fame
Has spread among the crowd ; things, that but whisper'd
Have arch'd the hearer's brow, and riveted
His eyes in fearful extasy : No matter
What ; so't be strange, and dreadful.—Sorceries,
Assaffinations, poisonings—the deeper
My guilt, the blacker his ingratitude.

And you, ye manes of ambition's victims,
Enshrined Claudius, with the pitied ghosts
Of the Syllani, doom'd to early death,
(Ye unavailing horrors, fruitless crimes !)
If from the realms of night my voice ye hear,
In lieu of penitence, and vain remorse,
Accept my vengeance. Tho' by me ye bled,
He was the cause. My love, my fears for him

Dried

Dried the soft springs of pity in my heart,
 And froze them up with deadly cruelty.
 Yet if your injur'd shades demand my fate,
 If murder cries for murder, blood for blood,
 Let me not fall alone ; but crush his pride,
 And sink the traitor in his mother's ruin.

Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

O T H O, P O P P Æ A.

O T H O.

Thus far we're safe. Thanks to the rosy queen
 Of amorous thefts : And had her wanton son
 Lent us his wings, we could not have beguil'd
 With more elusive speed the dazzled sight
 Of wakeful jealousy. Be gay securely ;
 Dispell, my fair, with smiles, the tim'rous cloud
 That hangs on thy clear brow. So Helen look'd,
 So her white neck reclin'd, so was she borne
 By the young Trojan to his gilded bark
 With fond reluctance, yielding modesty,
 And oft reverted eye, as if she knew not
 Whether she fear'd, or wish'd to be pursued.

* * * * *

LETTER

L E T T E R III.

Mr. W E S T to Mr. G R A Y.

Popes, April 4, 1742.

I Own in general I think Agrippina's speech too long* ; but how to retrench it, I know not : But I have something else to say, and that is in relation to the style, which appears to me too antiquated. Racine was of another opinion ; he no where gives you the phrases of Ronfard : His language is the language of the times, and that of the purest sort ; so that his French is reckoned a standard. I will not decide what style is fit for our English stage ; but I should rather choose one that bordered upon Cato, than upon Shakespear. One may imitate (if one can) Shakespear's manner, his surprizing strokes of true nature, his expressive force in painting characters,

N O T E.

* The Editor has obviated this objection, not by retrenching, but by putting part of it into the mouth of Aceronia, and by breaking it in a few other places. Originally it was one continued speech from the line " Thus ever grave and undisturbed Reflection" to the end of the scene ; which was undoubtedly too long for the lungs of any Actress.

characters, and all his other beauties ; preserving at the same time our own language. Were Shakespear alive now, he would write a different style from what he did. These are my sentiments upon these matters : Perhaps I am wrong, for I am neither a Tarpa, nor am I quite an Aristarchus. You see I write freely both of you and Shakespear ; but it is as good as writing not freely, where you know it is acceptable.

I have been tormented within this week with a most violent cough ; for when once it sets up its note, it will go on, cough after cough, shaking and tearing me for half an hour together ; and then it leaves me in a great sweat, as much fatigued as if I had been labouring at the plough. All this description of my cough in prose, is only to introduce another description of it in verse, perhaps not worth your perusal ; but it is very short, and besides has this remarkable in it, that it was the production of four o'clock in the morning, while I lay in my bed tossing and coughing, and all unable to sleep.

Ante omnes morbos importunissima tussis,
 Quâ durare datur, traxitque sub ilia vires :
 Dura etenim versans imo sub pectore regna,
 Perpetuo exercet teneras luctamine costas,

Oraque

Oraque distorquet, vocemque immutat anhelam;
 Nec cessare locus : sed sævo concita motu
 Molle domat latus, & corpus labor omne fatigat :
 Unde molesta dies, noctemque insomnia turbant.
 Nec tua, si mecum Comes hic jucundus adestes,
 Verba juvare queant, aut hunc lenire dolorem
 Sufficiant tua vox dulcis, nec vultus amatus.

Do not mistake me, I do not condemn Tacitus: I was then inclined to find him tedious: The German sedition sufficiently made up for it; and the speech of Germanicus, by which he reclaims his soldiers, is quite masterly. Your New Dunciad I have no conception of, I shall be too late for our dinner if I write any more.

Yours,

L E T T E R IV.

Mr. G R A Y to Mr, W E S T.

London, April, Thursday.

YOU are the first who ever made a Muse of a Cough; to me it seems a much more easy task to versify in one's sleep, (that indeed you were of old famous

mous for *) than for want of it. Not the wakeful nightingale (when she had a cough) ever sung so sweetly. I give you thanks for your warble, and wish you could find yourself to rest. These wicked remains of your illness will sure give way to warm weather and gentle exercise; which I hope you will not omit as the season advances. Whatever low spirits and indolence, the effect of them, may advise to the contrary, I pray you add five steps to your walk daily for my sake; by the help of which, in a month's time, I propose to set you on horseback.

I talked of the Dunciad as concluding you had seen it; if you have not, do you choose I should get and send it to you? I have myself, upon your recommendation, been reading Joseph Andrews. The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in her lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of Wilson; and throughout he shews himself well read in Stage-Coaches, Country Squires, Inns, and Inns of Court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters,

N O T E.

* I suppose at Eton School.

ters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather as I shrewdly suspect their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things, (I mean such as characterize and paint nature) yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind *, the passions, and what not. Now as the paradisaical pleasures † of the Mahometans consist in playing upon the flute and lying with Houris, be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon.

You are very good in giving yourself the trouble to read and find fault with my long harangues. Your
freedom

N O T E S.

* He seems here to glance at Hutchinson, the disciple of Shaftsbury: Of whom he had not a much better opinion, than of his master.

† Whimsically put.—But what shall we say of the present taste of the French, when a writer whom Mr. Gray so justly esteemed as M. Marivaux is now held in such contempt, that *Marivauder* is a fashionable phrase amongst them, and signifies neither more nor less, than our own fashionable phrase of *prosing*? As to Crebillon, 'twas his "*Egaremens du Cœur*" & de l'*Esprit*" that our author chiefly esteemed; he had not, I believe, at this time published his more licentious pieces.

freedom (as you call it) has so little need of apologies, that I should scarce excuse your treating me any other-wise; which, whatever compliment it might be to my vanity, would be making a very ill one to my understanding. As to matter of stile, I have this to say: The language of the age † is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost every one, that has written, has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives: Nay sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespear and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. Let me give you some instances from Dryden, whom every body reckons a great master of our poetical tongue.—Full of *musical mopeings*—unlike the *trim* of love—a pleasant *beverage*—a *roundelay* of love—stood silent in his *mood*—with knots

N O T E.

† Nothing can be more just than this observation; and nothing more likely to preserve our poetry from falling into insipidity, than pursuing the rules here laid down for supporting the diction of it: Particularly with respect to the Drama,

knots and *knares* deformed—his *ireful mood*—in proud array—his *boon* was granted—and *disarray* and shameful rout—*wayward* but *wise*—*furbished* for the field—the *foiled dodderd* oaks—*disherited*—*smouldring* flames—*retchless* of laws—*crones* old and ugly—the *beldam* at his side—the *grandam-bag*—*villanize* his father's fame.—— But they are infinite: And our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible. In truth, Shakespear's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addisons and Rowes in this, than in those other great excellencies you mention. Every word in him is a picture. Pray put me the following lines into the tongue of our modern Dramatics:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass:
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph:
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up—
And what follows. To me they appear untranslatable;
and if this be the case, our language is greatly degene-
rated.

rated. However, the affectation of imitating Shakespear may doubtless be carried too far ; and is no sort of excuse for sentiments ill-suited, or speeches ill-timed, which I believe is a little the case with me. I guess the most faulty expressions may be these—*silken* son of *dalliance*—*drowsier* pretensions—wrinkled *beldams*—*arched* the hearer's brow and *riveted* his eyes in *fearful extasie*. These are easily altered or omitted : and indeed if the thoughts be wrong or superfluous, there is nothing easier than to leave out the whole. The first ten or twelve lines are, I believe, the best † ; and as for the rest, I was betrayed into a good deal of it by Tacitus ; only what he has said in five words, I imagine I have said in fifty lines : Such is the misfortune of imitating the inimitable. Now, if you are of my opinion, una litura may do the business, better than a dozen ; and you need not fear unravelling my web. I am a sort of spider ; and have little else to do but spin it over again, or creep to some other place and spin there. Alas ! for one who has nothing to do but amuse himself, I believe my amusements

N O T E.

† The lines which he means here are from—*thus ever grave and undisturb'd reflection—to Rubellius lives*. For the part of the scene, which he sent in his former letter, began there.

ments are as little amusing as most folks. But no matter; it makes the hours pass; and is better than *ἡ ἀμυσία καὶ ἀμεσία καταβιώναι*. Adieu.

L E T T E R V.

Mr. W E S T to Mr. G R A Y.

TO begin with the conclusion of your letter, which is Greek, I desire that you will quarrel no more with your manner of passing your time. In my opinion it is irreproachable, especially as it produces such excellent fruit; and if I, like a saucy bird, must be pecking at it, you ought to consider that it is because I like it. No una litura I beg you, no unravelling of your web, dear Sir! only pursue it a little further, and then one shall be able to judge of it a little better. You know the crisis of a play is in the first act; its damnation or salvation wholly rests there. But till that first act is over, every body suspends his vote; so how do you think I can form, as yet, any just idea of the speeches in regard to their length or shortness? The connection and symmetry of such little parts with one another must naturally escape me, as not having the plan of the whole in my head;

head ; neither can I decide about the thoughts whether they are wrong or superfluous ; they may have some future tendency which I perceive not. The style only was free to me, and there I find we are pretty much of the same sentiment : For you say the affectation of imitating Shakespear may doubtless be carried too far ; I say as much and no more. For old words we know are old gold, provided they are well chosen. Whatever Ennius was, I do not consider Shakespear as a dunghill in the least : On the contrary, he is a mine of ancient ore, where all our great modern poets have found their advantage. I do not know how it is ; but his old expressions * have more energy in them than ours, and are even more adapted to poetry ; certainly, where they are judiciously and sparingly inserted, they add a certain grace to the composition ;

N O T E.

* Shakespear's energy does not arise so much from these old expressions, (most of which were not old in his time) but from his artificial management of them. This artifice in the great Poet is developed with much exactness by Dr. Hurd in his excellent note on this passage in Horace's Ep. ad Pisones.

Dixeris egregiè, notum si callida verbum
Reddiderit junctura novum.

See Hurd's Horace, vol. 1st, Edit. 4th, p. 49.

composition ; in the same manner as Pouffin gave a beauty to his pictures by his knowledge in the antient proportions : But should he, or any other painter, carry the imitation too far, and neglect that best of models Nature, I am afraid it would prove a very flat performance. To finish this long criticism : I have this further notion about old words revived, (is not this a pretty way of finishing ?) I think them of excellent use in tales ; they add a certain drollery to the comic, and a romantic gravity to the serious, which are both charming in their kind ; and this way of charming Dryden understood very well. One need only read Milton to acknowledge the dignity they give the Epic. But now comes my opinion that they ought to be used in Tragedy more sparingly, than in most kinds of poetry. Tragedy is designed for public representation, and what is designed for that should be certainly most intelligible. I believe half the audience that come to Shakespear's plays do not understand the half of what they hear.—But finissons enfin.—Yet one word more.—You think the ten or twelve first lines the best, now I am for the fourteen last * ; add, that they contain not one word of antientry.

VOL. III.

C

I

N O T E.

* He means the conclusion of the first scene.—But here and throughout his criticism on old words, he is not so consistent

I rejoice you found amusement in Joseph Andrews. But then I think your conceptions of Paradise a little upon the Bergerac. Les Lettres du Seraphim R. a Madame la Cherubinesse de Q. What a piece of extravagance would there be !

And now you must know that my body continues weak and enervate. And for my animal spirits they are in perpetual fluctuation : Some whole days I have no relish, no attention for any thing ; at other times I revive, and am capable of writing a long letter, as you see ; and though I do not write speeches, yet I translate them. When you understand what speech, you will own that it is a bold and perhaps a dull attempt. In three words, it is prose, it is from Tacitus, it is of Germanicus. Peruse, perpend, pronounce †.

LETTER

N O T E.

assistent as his correspondent ; for he here insists that *all* antientry should be struck out, and in a former passage he admits it may be used sparingly.

† This speech I omit to print, as I have generally avoided to publish mere translations either of Mr. Gray or his friend.

L E T T E R VI.

Mr. G R A Y to Mr. W E S T.

London, April, 1742.

I Should not have failed to answer your Letter immediately, but I went out of town for a little while, which hindered me. Its length (besides the pleasure naturally accompanying a long letter from you) affords me a new one, when I think it is a symptom of the recovery of your health, and flatter myself that your bodily strength returns in proportion. Pray do not forget to mention the progress you make continually. As to Agrippina, I begin to be of your opinion; and find myself (as women are of their children) less enamoured of my productions the older they grow. * She is laid up

C 2

to

N O T E.

* He never after awakened her; and I believe this was occasioned by the strictures which his friend had made on his dramatic style; which (though he did not think them well founded, as they certainly were not) had an effect which Mr. West, we may believe, did not intend them to have. I remember some years after I was also the innocent cause of
his

to sleep till next summer; so bid her good night. I think you have translated Tacitus very justly, that is, freely; and accommodated his thoughts to the turn and genius of our language; which, though I commend your judgment, is no commendation of the English tongue, which is too diffuse, and daily grows more and more enervate. One shall never be more sensible of this, than in turning an Author like Tacitus. I have been trying it in some parts of Thucydides, (who has a little resemblance of him in his conciseness) and endeavoured to do it closely, but found it produced mere nonsense. If you have any inclination to see what figure Tacitus makes in Italian, I have a Tuscan translation of Davanzati, much esteemed in Italy; and will send you the same

N O T E.

his delaying to finish his fine ode on the progress of Poetry. I told him, on reading the part he shewed me, that "tho' I admired it greatly, and thought that it breathed the very spirit of Pindar, yet I suspected it would by no means hit the public taste." Finding afterwards that he did not proceed in finishing it, I often expostulated with him on the subject; but he always replied, "No, you have thrown cold water upon it." I mention this little anecdote, to shew how much the opinion of a friend, even when it did not convince his judgment, affected his inclination.

same speech you sent me; that is, if you care for it.
In the mean time accept of † Propertius. * * *

L E T T E R VII.

Mr. W E S T to Mr. G R A Y.

Popes, May 5, 1742.

WITHOUT any preface I come to your verses, which I read over and over with excessive pleasure, and which are at least as good as Propertius. I am only sorry you follow the blunders of Broukhufius, all whose insertions are nonsense. I have some objections to your antiquated words, and am also an enemy to Alexandrines; at least I do not like them in Elegy. But after all, I admire your translation so extremely, that I cannot help repeating I long to shew you some little errors you are fallen into by following Broukhufius †. * *

Were

N O T E S.

† A translation of the 1st elegy of the 2d book in English rhyme; omitted for the reason given in the last note but one.

‡ I have omitted here a paragraph or two, in which different lines of the Elegy were quoted, because I had previously omitted the translation of it.

Were I with you now, and Propertius with your *verses* lay upon the table between us, I could discuss this point in a moment; but there is nothing so tiresome as spinning out a criticism in a letter; doubts arise, and explanations follow, till there swells out at least a volume of undigested observations: and all because you are not with him whom you want to convince. Read only the Letters between Pope and Cromwell in proof of this; they dispute without end. Are you aware now that I have an interest all this while in banishing Criticism from our correspondence? Indeed I have; for I am going to write down a little Ode (if it deserves the name) for your perusal, which I am afraid will hardly stand that test. Nevertheless I leave you at your full liberty; so here it follows.

O D E.

Dear Gray, that always in my heart
 Possessest far the better part,
 What mean these sudden blasts that rise
 And drive the Zephyrs from the skies?
 O join with mine thy tuneful lay,
 And invoke the tardy May.

Come,

Come, fairest Nymph, resume thy reign!
 Bring all the Graces in thy train!
 With balmy breath and flowery tread,
 Rise from thy soft ambrosial bed;
 Where, in elysian slumber bound,
 Embow'ring myrtles veil thee round.

Awake, in all thy glories drest,
 Recall the Zephyrs from the west;
 Restore the sun, revive the skies,
 At mine, and Nature's call, arise!
 Great Nature's self upbraids thy stay,
 And misses her accustom'd May.

See! all her works demand thy aid;
 The labours of Pomona fade:
 A plaint is heard from ev'ry tree;
 Each budding flow'ret calls for thee;
 The birds forget to love and sing;
 With storms alone the forests ring.

Come then, with Pleasure at thy side,
 Diffuse thy vernal spirit wide;
 Create, where'er thou turn'st thy eye,
 Peace, Plenty, Love, and Harmony;

Till

Till ev'ry being share its part,
And Heav'n and Earth be glad at heart.

L E T T E R VIII.

Mr. G R A Y to Mr. W E S T.

London, May 8, 1742.

I Rejoice to see you putting up your prayers to the May: She cannot choofe but come at fuch a call. It is as light and genteel as herself. You bid me find fault; I am afraid I cannot; however I will try. The first stanza (if what you say to me in it did not make me think it the best) I should call the worst of the five (except the fourth line). The two next are very picturesque, Miltonic, and musical; her bed is so soft and so snug that I long to lie with her. But those two lines, "Great Nature" are my favourites. The exclamation of the flowers is a little step too far. The last stanza is full as good as the second and third; the last line bold, but I think not too bold. Now, as to myself and my translation, pray do not call names. I never saw Broukhufius in my life. It is Scaliger who attempted to range Propertius in order; who was, and
still

still is, in sad condition † * * *. You see, by what I sent you, that I converse, as usual, with none but the dead : They are my old friends, and almost make me long to be with them. You will not wonder therefore, that I, who live only in times past, am able to tell you no news of the present. I have finished the Peloponnesian war much to my honour, and a tight conflict it was, I promise you. I have drank and sung with Anacreon for the last fortnight, and am now feeding sheep with Theocritus. Besides, to quit my figure, (because it is foolish) I have run over Pliny's Epistles and Martial *ἐκ παρέργου*; not to mention Petrarch, who, by the way, is sometimes very tender and natural. I must needs tell you three lines in Anacreon, where the expression seems to me inimitable. He is describing hair as he would have it painted.

Ἑλικας δ' ἑλευθέρας μοι

Πλοκάμων ἄτακτα συνθεῖς

Ἀφ' ὧς θέλῃσι κεῖθαι.

Guess, too, where this is about a dimple.

Sigilla in mento impressa Amoris digitulo

Vestigio demonstrant mollitudinem.

LETTER

N O T E.

† Here some criticism on the Elegy is omitted for a former reason.

L E T T E R IX.

Mr. W E S T to Mr. G R A Y.

Popes, May 11, 1742.

YOUR fragment is in Aulus Gellius; and both it and your Greek delicious. But why are you thus melanchòly? I am so sorry for it, that you see I cannot forbear writing again the very first opportunity; though I have little to say, except to expostulate with you about it. I find you converse much with the dead, and I do not blame you for that; I converse with them too, though not indeed with the Greek. But I must condemn you for your longing to be with them. What, are there no joys among the living? I could almost cry out with Catullus, “Alphene immemor, atque unanimis falsæ sodalibus!” But to turn an accusation thus upon another, is ungenerous; so I will take my leave of you for the present with a “Vale, et vive paulisper cum vivis.”

L E T T E R

L E T T E R X.

Mr. G R A Y to Mr. W E S T.

London, May 27, 1742.

MINE, you are to know, is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy for the most part; which though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one calls Joy or Pleasure, yet is a good easy sort of a state, and ça ne laisse que de s'amuser. The only fault of it is insipidity; which is apt now and then to give a sort of Ennui, which makes one form certain little wishes that signify nothing. But there is another sort, black indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertullian's rule of faith, Credo quia impossibile est; for it believes, nay, is sure of every thing that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and, on the other hand, excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and every thing that is pleasurable; from this the Lord deliver us! for none but he and sunshiny weather can do it. In hopes of enjoying this kind of weather, I am going into the country for a few weeks, but shall be never the nearer any society;

ciety; so, if you have any charity, you will continue to write. My life is like Harry the Fourth's supper of Hens. " Poulets a la broche, Poulets en Ragout, " Poulets en Hâchis, Poulets en Fricasées." Reading here, Reading there; nothing but books with different sauces. Do not let me lose my desert then; for though that be Reading too, yet it has a very different flavour. The May seems to be come since your invitation; and I propose to bask in her beams and dress me in her roses.

Et Caput in vernâ semper habere rosâ.

I shall see Mr. ** and his Wife, nay, and his Child too, for he has got a Boy. Is it not odd to consider one's Cotemporaries in the grave light of Husband and Father? There is my Lords ** and ***, they are Statesmen: Do not you remember them dirty boys playing at cricket? As for me, I am never a bit the older, nor the bigger, nor the wiser than I was then: No, not for having been beyond sea. Pray how are you?

I send you an inscription for a wood joining to a park of mine; (it is on the confines of Mount Cithæron, on the left hand as you go to Thebes) you know I am no friend to hunters, and hate to be disturbed by their noise.

Ἀζόμενος

Ἀζόμενος πολύθηρον ἐκηβόλῃ ἄλσος ἀνάσσει
 τᾷς δεινᾷς τεμένει λείπε, κυναγέ, θεᾷς
 Μῆνοι ἄρ' ἔνθα κύκων ζαθέων κλαγγεῦσιν ὕλαγμοὶ
 ἀνταχεῖς Νυμφᾶν ἀγροτερᾶν κελάδῳ *.

Here follows also the beginning of an Heroic Epistle; but you must give me leave to tell my own story first, because Historians differ. Massinissa was the son of Gala King of the Massyli; and, when very young at the head of his father's army, gave a most signal overthrow to Syphax, King of the Masæsylians, then an ally of the Romans. Soon after Asdrubal, son of Gisgo the Carthaginian General, gave the beautiful Sophonisba, his daughter, in marriage to the young prince. But this marriage was not consummated on account of Massinissa's being obliged to hasten into Spain, there to command his father's troops, who were auxiliaries of the Carthaginians. Their affairs at this time began to be in a bad condition; and they thought it might be greatly for their interest, if they could bring over Syphax

N O T E.

* In the 12th Letter of the first Section, Mr. Gray says of his friend's translation of an Epigram of Posidippus, "Græcam illam ἀφελείαν mirificè sapit." The learned reader, I imagine, will readily give this tetraffic the same character.

phax to themselves. This in time they actually effected ; and, to strengthen their new alliance, commanded Afrubal to give his daughter to Syphax. (It is probable their ingratitude to Massinissa arose from the great change of affairs, which had happened among the Massylians during his absence ; for his father and uncle were dead, and a distant relation of the royal family had usurped the throne.) Sophonisba was accordingly married to Syphax ; and Massinissa, enraged at the affront, became a friend to the Romans. They drove the Carthaginians before them out of Spain, and carried the war into Africa, defeated Syphax, and took him prisoner ; upon which Cirtha (his capital) opened her gates to Lælius and Massinissa. The rest of the affair, the marriage, and the sending of poison, every body knows. This is partly taken from Livy, and partly from Appian.

SOPHONISBA MASSINISSÆ.

EPISTOLA.

Egregium accipio promissi Munus amoris,

Inque manu mortem, jam fruitura, fero :

Atque utinam citius mandasses, luce vel unâ ;

Transieram Stygios non inhonesta lacus.

Victoris

Victoris nec passa toros, nova nupta, mariti,
 Nec fueram fastus, Roma superba, tuos.
 Scilicet hæc partem tibi, Massinissa, triumph
 Detractam, hæc pompæ jura minora suæ
 Imputat, atque uxor quòd non tua pressa catenis,
 Objecta & sævæ plaufibus urbis eo :
 Quin tu pro tantis cepisti præmia factis,
 Magnum Romanæ pignus amicitiae !
 Scipiadæ excuses, oro, si tardius utar
 Munere. Non nimiùm vivere, crede, velim.
 Parva mora est, breve sed tempus mea fama requirit :
 Detinet hæc animam cura suprema meam.
 Quæ patriæ prodesse meæ Regina ferebar,
 Inter Elifæas gloria prima nurus,
 Ne videar flammæ nimis indulgisse secundæ,
 Vel nimis hostiles extimuisse manus.
 Fortunam atque annos liceat revocare priores,
 Gaudiaque heu ! quantis nostra repensa malis.
 Primitiasne tuas meministi atque arma Syphacis
 Fusa, & per Tyrias ducta trophæa vias ?
 (Laudis at antiquæ forsan meminisse pigebit,
 Quodque decus quondam causa ruboris erit.)
 Tempus ego certe memini, felicia Pænis
 Quo te non puduit solvere vota deis ;
 Mæniaque intrantem vidi : longo agmine duxit
 Turba salutantum, purpureique patres.

Fæminæ

Fæminea ante omnes longe admiratur euntem
 Hæret & aspectu tota caterva tuo.
 Jam flexi, regale decus, per colla capilli,
 Jam decet ardenti fuscus in ore color !
 Commendat frontis generosa modestia formam,
 Seque cupit laudi furripuisse suæ.
 Prima genas tenui signat vix flore juventas,
 Et dextræ soli credimus esse virum.
 Dum faciles gradiens oculos per singula jactas,
 (Seu rexit casus lumina, sive Venus)
 In me (vel certè visum est) conversa morari
 Sensi ; virgineus perculit ora pudor.
 Nescio quid vultum molle spirare tuendo,
 Credideramque tuos lentius ire pedes.
 Quærebam, juxta æqualis si dignior esset,
 Quæ poterat visus detinuisse tuos :
 Nulla fuit circum æqualis quæ dignior esset,
 Afferuitque decus conscia forma suum.
 Pompæ finis erat *. Totâ vix nocte quievi :
 Sin premat invitæ lumina victa sopor,
 Somnus habet pompas, eademque recursat imago ;
 Atque iterum hesterni munere victor ades.

* * * * *

Immediately

N O T E.

* There is so much of nature in the sentiment, as well as
 poetry in the description of this triumphal entry of young
Massinissa,

Immediately after writing the preceding Letter, Mr. Gray went upon a visit to his relations at Stoke; where he writ that beautiful little Ode which stands first in his collection of Poems. He sent it as soon as written to his beloved friend; but he was * dead before it reached Hertfordshire. He died † only twenty days

VOL. III.

D

after

N O T E S.

Massinissa, that it seems much to be regretted the author did not finish this poem. But I believe he never proceeded further with it. I had therefore my doubts concerning the printing of so small a part; but as I thought it the best, because the only original specimen of Mr. Gray's Ovidian verse, (the rest of his Hexameters and Pentameters being only translations either from English or Italian) I was willing to give it to the reader.

* This singular anecdote is founded on a marginal note in his common-place book, where that Ode is transcribed, and the following memorandum annexed: "Written at Stoke the beginning of June 1742, and sent to Mr. West, not knowing he was then dead."

† He was buried at Hatfield (the House called Popes being in that parish.) On a grave-stone in the chancel is the following plain inscription: "Here lieth the body of Richard West, Esq; only son to the Right Honourable Richard West, Esq; late Lord Chancellor of Ireland, who died the 1st of June, 1742, in the 26th year of his age."

after he had written the letter to Mr. Gray, which concluded with "Vale, & vive paulisper cum vivis." So little was the amiable youth then aware of the short time that he himself would be numbered amongst the living. But this is almost constantly the case with such persons as die of that most remediless, yet most flattering of all distempers, a Consumption. Shall Humanity be thankful or sorry that it is so? Thankful, surely. For as this malady generally attacks the Young and the Innocent, it seems the merciful intention of Heaven that, to these, death should come unperceived, and as it were by stealth; divested of one of his sharpest stings, the lingering expectation of their dissolution. As to Mr. Gray, we may assure ourselves that he felt much more than his dying friend, when the letter, which inclosed the Ode, was returned unopened. There seems to be a kind of presentiment in that pathetic piece, which Readers of taste will feel when they learn this anecdote; and which will make them read it with redoubled pleasure. It will also throw a melancholy grace (to borrow one of his own expressions) on the Ode on a distant prospect of Eton, and on that to Adversity; both of them written the August following: for as both these Poems abound with Pathos, those who have feeling hearts will feel this

this excellence the more strongly, when they know the cause from whence it arose; and the unfeeling will, perhaps, learn to respect what they cannot taste, when they are prevented from imputing to a splenetic melancholy, what in fact sprung from the most benevolent of all sensations. I am inclined to believe that the Elegy in a Country Church-yard was begun, if not concluded, at this time also: Though I am aware that, as it stands at present, the conclusion is of a later date; how that was originally, I have shewn in my notes on the poem. But the first impulse of his sorrow for the death of his friend gave birth to a very tender Sonnet in English, on the Petrarchian model; and also to a sublime Apostrophe in Hexameters, written in the genuine strain of Classical majesty, with which he intended to begin one of his books, "De Principiis Cogitandi." This I shall shortly give the Reader: but the Sonnet, being completed, is inserted amongst the rest of his Poems.

It may seem somewhat extraordinary, that Mr. Gray never attempted any thing in English verse, (except the beginning of Agrippina, and a few translations) before the first Ode lately mentioned. Shall we attribute this to his having been educated at Eton, or to what other cause? Certain it is, that when I first knew him, he seemed to set a greater value on his Latin poetry, than

on that which he had composed in his native language; and had almost the same foible then, which I have since known him laugh at in Petrarch, when we read that most entertaining of all books, entitled “*Memoires pour la vie de François Petrarque tirés de ses œuvres,*” &c. I am apt to think that the little popularity which M. de Polignac’s *Anti-Lucretius* acquired, after it had been so long and so eagerly expected by the learned, induced Mr. Gray to lay aside his didactic Plan. However this may be, he writ no Latin verse after this period; except perhaps some part of the 1st book of the Poem just mentioned. This therefore seems the proper place to introduce that fragment; which being the most considerable in itself of all his Latin compositions, and perhaps the most laboured of any of his Poems, it were to be wished that I could give the reader more insight into his design, than the few scattered papers, which he has left, enable me to do. It is clear, however, from the Exordium itself, that he meant to make the same use of Mr. Locke’s Essay on the Human Understanding, which Lucretius did of the Dogmas of Epicurus. And the first six lines plainly intimate, that his general design was to be comprized in four books.

The 1st. On the origin of our Ideas.

Unde Animus scire incipiat—

The

The 2d. On the distribution of these Ideas in the Memory.

——quibus inchoet orsa
Principiis seriem rerum, tenuemque catenam
Mnemosyne——

The 3d. On the Province of Reason and its gradual improvement.

——Ratio unde, rudi sub pectore, tardum
Augeat imperium——

The 4th. On the Cause and Effects of the Passions.

—— & primum mortalibus ægris
Ira, Dolor, Metus, & Curæ nascantur inanes.

But he has not drawn out any of the Arguments of these Books, except a part of the first; and that only so far as he executed of it. This it will be proper here to insert; and also, for the ease of the reader, to repeat the several parts at the bottom of the subsequent pages.

General plan of the Poem.—First, Invocation to Mr. Locke. Address to Favonius, shewing the use and importance of the design.—Beginning.—Connection of the soul and body; Nerves, the instruments of sensation.—

tion.—Touch, the first and most extensive sense, described.—Begins before the birth; Pain, our first idea when born.—Seeing, the second sense.—Digressive encomium of Light. The gradual opening and improvement of this sense, and that of Hearing, their connection with the higher faculties of the Mind; Sense of Beauty and Order and Harmony annexed to them. From the latter, our delight in Eloquence, Poetry, and Music derived.—Office of the Taste and Smell.—Internal sense of Reflection, whereby the mind views its own powers and operations, compared to a young Wood-nymph admiring herself in some fountain.—Admission of Ideas, some by a single sense, some by two, others by every way of Sensation and Reflection. Instance in a person born blind, he has no ideas of Light and Colours; but he has those of Figure, Motion, Extension, and Space, (objects both of the sight and touch.) Third sort, those which make their entrance into the mind by every channel alike; as Pleasure, and Pain, Power, Existence, Unity, and Succession. Properties of Bodies, whereby they make themselves known to us. Primary qualities: Magnitude, Solidity, Mobility, Texture, and Figure. * * *

DE PRINCIPIIS COGITANDI.

LIBER PRIMUS.

A D F A V O N I U M.

'U NDE Animus scire incipiat: quibus inchoet orsa
 Principiis feriem rerum, tenuemque catenam
 Mnemosyne: Ratio unde rudi sub pectore tardum
 Augeat imperium; & primum mortalibus ægris
 Ira, Dolor, Metus, & Curæ nascantur inanes, 5
 Hinc canere aggredior. ² Nec dedignare canentem,
 O decus! Angliacæ certe O lux altera gentis!
 Si quâ primus iter monstras, vestigia conor
 Signare incertâ, tremulâque insistere plantâ. *

Quin

N O T E S.

¹ Plan of the Poem. — ² Invocation to Mr. Locke.

* It has been already observed in the Note on Let. 17. Sect. I. p. 50. that Mr. Gray's Hexameters, besides having the variety of Virgil's Pauses, closed also with his Elisions. For Virgil, as an attentive reader will immediately perceive, generally introduces one Elision, and not unfrequently more, into those Lines which terminate the Sense. This gives to his Versification its last and most exquisite grace, and leaves
 the

Quin potius duc ipse (potes namque omnia) sanctum 10
Ad limen, (si ritè adeo, si pectore puro,)

Obscuræ referans Naturæ ingentia claustra.

Tu cæcas rerum causas, fontemque severum

Pande, Pater; tibi enim, tibi, veri magne Sacerdos,

Corda patent hominum, atque altæ penetralia Mentis. 15

Tuque aures adhibe vacuas, facilesque, Favonî,
(Quod tibi crescit opus) ³ simplex nec despice carmen,

Nec vatem: non illa leves primordia motus,

Quanquam parva, dabunt. Lætum vel amabile quicquid

Usquam oritur, trahit hinc ortum; nec surgit ad

auras,

20

Quin ea conspirent simul, eventusque secudent.

Hinc variæ vitæ artes, ac mollior usus,

Dulce & amicitiae vinclum: Sapiencia dia

Hinc roseum accendit lumen, vultuque sereno

Humanas aperit mentes, nova gaudia monstrans, 25

Deformesque fugat curas, vanosque timores:

Scilicet & rerum crescit pulcherrima Virtus.

IIIa

N O T E.

the ear fully satisfied. Mr. Gray could not fail to observe, and of course to aim at this happy effect of Elisions in a concluding Line; of which the present Poem, in particular, affords indubitable and abundant proofs.

³ Use and Extent of the Subject.

Illa etiam, quæ te (mirùm) noctesque diesque
 Assiduè foveat inspirans, linguamque sequentem
 Temperat in numeros, atque horas mulcet inertes; 30
 Aurea non aliâ se jactat origine Musa.

4 Principio, ut magnum fœdus Natura creatrix
 Firmavit, tardis jussitque inolescere membris
 Sublimes animas; tenebroso in carcere partem
 Noluit ætheream longo torpere veterno: 35
 Nec per se proprium passa exercere vigorem est,
 Ne sociæ molis conjunctos sperneret artus,
 Ponderis oblita, & cœlestis conscia flammæ.
 Idcirco 5 innumero ductu tremere undique fibras
 Nervorum instituit: tum toto corpore miscens 40
 Implicuit latè ramos, & senfile textum,
 Implevitque humore suo (seu lymphæ vocanda,
 Sive aura est) tenuis certè, atque levissima quædam
 Vis versatur agens, parvosque infusa canales
 Perfluit; assiduè externis quæ concita plagis, 45
 Mobilis, incussique fidelis nuntia motûs,
 Hinc indè accensâ contage relabitur usque
 Ad superas hominis sedes, arcemque cerebri.
 Namque illic posuit solium, & sua templa sacra vit

Mens

N O T E S.

4 Union of the Soul and Body.—5 Office of the nervous
 System.—

⁶Mens animi : hanc circum coëunt, densoque feruntur 50
 Agmine notitiæ, simulacraque tenuia rerum :
 Ecce autem naturæ ingens aperitur imago
 Immensæ, variique patent commercia mundi.

Ac uti longinquis descendunt montibus amnes
 Velivolus Tamisis, flaventisque Indus arenæ, 55
 Euphratesque, Tagusque, & opimo flumine Ganges,
 Undas quisque suas volvens, cursuque sonoro
 In mare prorumpunt : hos magno acclinis in antro
 Excipit Oceanus, natorumque ordine longo
 Dona recognoscit venientûm, ultròque serenat 60
 Cæruleam faciem, & diffuso marmore ridet.
 Haud aliter species properant se inferre novellæ
 Certatim menti, atque aditus quino agmine complent.

⁷ Primas tactus agit partes, primusque minutæ
 Laxat iter cæcum turbæ, recipitque ruentem. 65
 Non idem huic modus est, qui fratribus : amplius ille
 Imperium affectat senior, penitusque medullis,
 Visceribusque habitat totis, pellîsque recentem
 Funditur in telam, & latè per stamina vivit.
 Necdum etiam matris puer eluctatus ab alvo 70
 Multiplices solvit tunicas, & vincula rupit;

Sopitus

N O T E S.

⁶ Sensation, the Origin of our Ideas.—⁷ The Touch, our first and most extensive Sense.

Sopitus molli fomno, tepidoque liquore
 Circumfusus adhuc : tactus tamen aura laceffit
 Jamdudum levior sensus, animamque reclusit.
 Idque magis simul, ac solitum blandumque calorem 75
 Frigore mutavit cœli, quod verberat acri
 Impete inassuetos artus : tum sævior adstat,
 Humanæque comes vitæ Dolor excipit ; ille
 Cunctantem frustra & tremulo multa ore querentem
 Corripit invadens, ferreisque amplectitur ulnis. 80
 * Tum species primùm patefacta est candida Lucis
 (Usque vices adeò Natura bonique, malique,
 Exæquat, justâque manu sua damna rependit)
 Tum primùm, ignotosque bibunt nova lumina soles.
 ° Carmine quo, Dea, te dicam, gratissima cœli 85
 Progenies, ortumque tuum ; gemmantia rore
 Ut per prata levi lustras, & floribus halans
 Purpureum Veris gremium, scenamque virentem
 Pingis, & umbriferos colles, & cærula regna ?
 Gratia te, Venerisque Lepos, & mille Colorum, 90
 Formarumque chorus sequitur, Motusque decentes,
 At caput invisum Stygiis Nox atra tenebris
 Abdidit, horrendæque simul Formidinis ora,
 Pervigilesque æstus Curarum, atque anxius Angor :
 Undique

N O T E S.

* Sight, our second Sense.—° Digression on Light.

Undique Lætitiâ florent mortalia corda,
Purus & arridet largis fulgoribus Æther. 95

Omnia nec tu ideò invalidæ se pandere Menti
(Quippe nimis teneros posset vis tanta diei
Perturbare, & inexpertos confundere visus)
Nec capere infantes animos, neu cernere credas 100

Tam variam molem, & miræ spectacula lucis :
¹⁰ Nescio quâ tamen hæc oculos dulcedine parvos
Splendida percussit novitas, traxitque sequentes ;
Nonne videmus enim, latis inserta fenestris
Sicubi se Phœbi dispergant aurea tela, 105

Sive lucernarum rutilus colluxerit ardor,
Extemplo hùc obverti aciem, quæ fixa repertos
Haurit inexpletum radios, fruiturque tuendo:

Altior huic verò sensu, majorque videtur
Addita, Judicioque arctè connexa potestas, 110
Quod simul atque ætas volventibus auxerit annis,
¹¹ Hæc simul, assiduo depascens omnia visu,
Perspiciet, vis quanta loci, quid polleat ordo,
Juncturæ quis honos, ut res accendere rebus
Lumina conjurant inter se, et mutua fulgent. 115
Nec

N O T E S.

¹⁰ Sight, imperfect at first, gradually improves.—¹¹ Ideas
of Beauty, Proportion, and Order.

Nec minor ¹² in geminis viget auribus insita virtus;
 Nec tantum in curvis quæ pervigil excubet antris
 Hinc atque hinc (ubi Vox tremefecerit ostia pulsu
 Aëriis invecta rotis) longèque recurset :
 Scilicet Eloquio hæc sonitus, hæc fulminis alas, 120
 Et mulcere dedit dictis & tollere corda,
 Verbaque metiri numeris, versuque ligare
 Repperit, & quicquid discant Libethrides undæ,
 Calliope quotiès, quotiès Pater ipse canendi
 Evolvat liquidum carmen, calamove loquenti 125
 Inspiret dulces animas, digitisque figuret.

¹³ At medias fauces, & linguæ humentia templa
 Gustus habet, quâ se insinuet jucunda saporum
 Luxuries, dona Autumni, Bacchique voluptas.

¹⁴ Naribus interea confedit odora hominum vis, 130
 Docta leves captare auras, Panchaïa quales
 Vere novo exhalat, Floræve quod oscula fragrant
 Roscida, cum Zephyri furtim sub vesperis horâ
 Respondet votis, mollemque aspirat amorem.

¹⁵ Tot portas altæ capitis circumdedit arcî 135
 Alma Parens, sensûsque vias per membra reclusit;
 Haud solas : namque intus agit vivata facultas,

Quâ

N O T E S.

- ¹² Hearing, also improvable by the Judgment.—¹³ Taste.—
¹⁴ Smell.—¹⁵ Reflection, the other Source of our Ideas.

Quâ sese explorat, contemplatusque repentè
 Ipse suas animus vires, momentaque cernit.
 Quid velit, aut possit, cupiat, fugiatve, vicissim 140
 Percipit imperio gaudens; neque corpora fallunt
 Morigera ad celeres actus, ac numina mentis.

Qualis Hamadryadum quondam si fortè fororum
 Una, novos peragrans saltus, & devia rura;
 (Atque illam in viridi suadet procumbere ripâ 145
 Fontis pura quies, & opaci frigoris umbra)
 Dum prona in latices speculi de margine pendet,
 Mirata est subitam venienti occurrere Nympham:
 Mox eosdem, quos ipsa, artus, eadem ora gerentem
 Unâ inferre gradus, unâ succedere sylvæ 150
 Aspicit alludens; seseque agnoscit in undis.
 Sic sensu interno rerum simulacra suarum
 Mens ciet, & proprios observat conscia vultus.
¹⁶ Nec verò simplex ratio, aut jus omnibus unum
 Constat imaginibus. Sunt quæ bina ostia nôrunt; 155
 Hæ privos servant aditus; sine legibus illæ
 Passim, quâ data porta, ruunt, animoque propinquant.
¹⁷ Respice, cui a cunis tristes extinxit ocellos,

Sæva

N O T E S.

¹⁶ Ideas approach the Soul, some by single Avenues, some by two, others by every Sense.—¹⁷ Illustration.—Light, an Example of the first.

Sæva & in eternas mergit natura tenebras :

Illi ignota dies lucet, vernusque colorum 160

Offusus nitor est, et vivæ gratia formæ.

¹⁸ Corporis at filum, & motus, spatiumque, locique

Intervalla datur certo dignoscere tactu :

Quandoquidem his iter ambiguum est, & janua duplex,

Exclusæque oculis species irrumpere tendunt 165

Per digitos. Atqui solis concessa potestas

Luminibus blandæ est radios immittere lucis.

¹⁹ Undique proporrò sociis, quacunque patescit

Notitiæ campus, mistæ lasciva feruntur

Turba voluptatis comites, formæque dolorum 170

Terribiles visu, & portâ glomerantur in omni.

²⁰ Nec vario minus introitu magnum ingruit Illud,

Quo facere & fungi, quo res existere circùm

Quamque sibi proprio cum corpore scimus, & ire

Ordine, perpetuoque per ævum flumine labi. 175

Nunc age quo valeat pacto, quâ sensilis arte

²¹ Affectare viam, atque animi tentare latebras

Materies (dictis aures adverte faventes)

Exsequar. Imprimis spatii quam multa per æquor

Millia multigenis pendant se corpora seclis, 180

Expende.

N O T E S.

¹⁸ Figure, Motion, Extension, of the second.—¹⁹ Pleasure, Pain, of the third.—²⁰ Also Power, Existence, Unity, Succession, Duration.—²¹ Primary Qualities of Bodies.

Expende. Hatid unum invenies, quod mente licebit
Amplecti, nedum proprius deprendere sensu,

²² Molis egens certæ, aut solido sine robore, cujus

Denique mobilitas linquit, texturave partes,

Ulla nec orarum circumcæfura coërcet.

185

Hæc conjuncta adeò totâ compage fatetur

Mundus, & extremo clamant in limine rerum,

(Si rebus datur Extremum) primordia. Firmat

Hæc eadem tactus (tactum quis dicere falsum

Audeat ?) hæc oculi nec lucidus arguit orbis.

190

Inde potestatum enasci densissima proles ;

Nam quòdcunque ferit visum, tangive laborat,

Quicquid nare bibis, vel concava concipit auris,

Quicquid lingua sapit, credas hoc omne, necesse est

Ponderibus, textu, discursu, mole, figurâ

195

Particulas præstare leves, & femina rerum.

Nunc oculos igitur pascunt, & luce ministrâ

Fulgere cuncta vides, spargique coloribus orbem,

Dum de sole trahunt alias, aliasque supernè

Detorquent, retròque docent se vertere flammâs.

200

Nunc trepido inter se fervent corpuscula pulsu,

Ut tremor æthera per magnum, latèque natantes

Aurarum fluctus avidi vibrantia claustra

Auditus

N O T E.

²² Magnitude, Solidity, Mobility, Texture, Figure.

Auditûs queat allabi, sonitumque propaget.

Cominûs interdum non ullo interprete per se 205

Nervorum invadunt teneras quatientia fibras,

Sensiferumque urgent ultrò per viscera motum.

* * *

DE PRINCIPIIS COGITANDI.

LIBER QUARTUS.

HACTENUS haud segnis Naturæ arcana retexi
Musarum interpres, primusque Britannia per arva
Romano liquidum deduxi flumine rivum.

Cum Tu opere in medio, spes tanti & causa laboris,

Linqvis, & æternam fati te condis in umbram ! 5

Vidi egomet duro graviter concussa dolore

Pectora, in alterius non unquam lenta dolorem;

Et languere oculos vidi, & pallescere amantem

Vultum, quò nunquam Pietas nisi rara, Fidesque,

Altus amor Veri, & purum spirabat Honestum. 10

Visa tamen tardi demùm inclementia morbi

Cessare est, reducemque iterum roseo ore Salutem

Speravi, atque unà tecum, dilecte Favoni !

Credulus heu longos, ut quondàm, fallere Soles:

Heu spes nequicquam dulces, atque irrita vota ! 15

VOL. III.

E

Heu

Heu mæstos Soles, sine te quos ducere flendo
 Per desideria, & questus jam cogor inanes!

At Tu, sancta anima, & nostri non indiga luctus,
 Stellanti templo, sincerique ætheris igne,
 Unde orta es, fruire; atque o si secura, nec ultra 20
 Mortalis, notos olim miserata labores
 Respectes, tenuesque vacet cognoscere curas;
 Humanam si fortè altâ de sede procellam
 Contemplêre, metus, stimulosque cupidinis acres,
 Gaudiaque & gemitus, parvoque in corde tumultum 25
 Irarum ingentem, & sævos sub pectore fluctus;
 Respice & has lacrymas, memori quas ictus amore
 Fundo; quod possum, juxtâ lugere sepulchrum
 Dum juvat, & mutæ vana hæc jactare favillæ.

* * *

END OF THE THIRD SECTION.

SECTION

SECTION THE FOURTH.

THE three foregoing Sections have carried the Reader through the juvenile part of Mr. Gray's life, and nearly, alas, to half of its duration. Those which remain, though less diversified by incidents, will, notwithstanding, I flatter myself, be equally instructive and amusing, as several of his most intimate friends have very kindly furnished me with their collections of his letters; which, added to those I have myself preserved, will enable me to select from them many excellent specimens of his more mature judgment, correct taste, and extensive learning, blended at the same time with many amiable instances of his sensibility: They will also specify the few remaining anecdotes, which occurred in a life so retired and sedentary as his: For the Reader must be here informed that, from the winter of the year 1742 to the day of his death, his principal residence was at Cambridge. He indeed, during the lives of his mother and aunts, spent

his summer vacations at Stoke; and, after they died, in making little tours on visits to his friends in different parts of the country: But he was seldom absent from college any considerable time, except between the years 1759 and 1762; when, on the opening of the British Musæum, he took lodgings in Southampton Row, in order to have recourse to the Harleian and other Manuscripts there deposited, from which he made several curious extracts. *

It may seem strange that a person who had conceived so early a dislike to Cambridge, and who (as we shall see presently) now returned to it with this prejudice rather augmented, should, when he was free to choose, make that very place his principal abode for near thirty years: But this I think may be easily accounted for from his love of books, (ever his ruling passion) and the straitness of his circumstances which prevented the gratification

N O T E.

* These, amounting in all to a tolerably-sized folio, are at present in Mr. Walpole's hands. He has already printed the speech of Sir Thomas Wyat from them in the second number of his Miscellaneous Antiquities. The Public must impute it to their own want of curiosity if more of them do not appear in print.

gratification of it. For to a man, who could not conveniently purchase even a small library, what situation so eligible as that which affords free access to a number of large ones? This reason also accounts for another singular fact. We have seen that, during his residence at Stoke, in the spring and summer of this same year 1742, he writ a considerable part of his more finished poems. Hence one would be naturally led to conclude that, on his return to Cambridge, when the ceremony of taking his degree was over, the quiet of the place would have prompted him to continue the cultivation of his poetical talents, and that immediately, as the Muse seems in this year to have peculiarly inspired him; but this was not the case. Reading, he has often told me, was much more agreeable to him than writing: He therefore now laid aside composition almost entirely, and applied himself with intense assiduity to the study of the best Greek authors; insomuch that, in the space of about six years, there were hardly any writers of note in that language which he had not only read but digested; remarking, by the mode of common-place, their contents, their difficult and corrupt passages, and all this with the accuracy of a critic added to the diligence of a student.

Before

Before I insert the next series of letters, I must take the liberty to mention, that it was not till about the year 1747 that I had the happiness of being introduced to the acquaintance of Mr. Gray. Some very juvenile imitations of Milton's juvenile poems, which I had written a year or two before, and of which the Monody on Mr. Pope's death was the principal *, he then, at the request of one of my friends, was so obliging as to revise. The same year, on account of a dispute which had happened between the master and fellows of Pembroke-Hall, I had the honour of being nominated by the Fellows to fill one of the vacant Fellowships †. I was at this time scholar of St. John's College, and Batchelor of Arts, personally unknown to the

N O T E S.

* The other two were in imitation of "l'Allegro & il Penseroso," and intitled "Il Bellicoso & il Pacifico." The latter of these I was persuaded to revise and publish in the Cambridge Collection of Verses on the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748. The former has since got into a Miscellany, printed by G. Pearch, from the indiscretion, I suppose, of some acquaintance who had a copy of it.

† Though nominated in 1747, I was not elected Fellow till February, 1749. The Master having refused his assent, claiming a negative, the affair was therefore not compromised till after an ineffectual litigation of two years.

the gentlemen who favoured me so highly; therefore that they gave me this mark of distinction and preference was greatly owing to Mr. Gray, who was well acquainted with several of that society, and to Dr. Herberden, whose known partiality to every, even the smallest degree of merit, led him warmly to second his recommendation. The Reader, I hope, will excuse this short piece of egotism, as it is written to express my gratitude, as well to the living as the dead, to declare the sense I shall ever retain of the honour which the Fellows of Pembroke-Hall then did me, and to particularize the time of an incident which brought me into the neighbourhood of Mr. Gray's College; and served to give that cement to our future intimacy, which is usually rendered stronger by proximity of place.

The Letters, which I select for this Section, are from the date of the year 1742 to that of 1768, when Mr. Gray was made Professor of Modern History. This, as it is a considerable interval of time, will perhaps require me the more frequently to resume my narrative; especially as I cannot now produce one continued chain of correspondence.

LETTER

L E T T E R I.

Mr. GRAY to * Dr. WHARTON.

Cambridge, Dec. 27, 1742.

I Ought to have returned you my thanks a long time ago, for the pleasure, I should say Prodigy, of your Letter; for such a thing has not happened above twice within this last age to mortal man, and no one here can conceive what it may portend. You have heard, I suppose, how I have been employed a part of the time; how, by my own indefatigable application for these ten years past, and by the care and vigilance of that worthy magistrate the Man in Blue †, (who, I assure you,

N O T E S.

* Of Old-Park, near Durham. With this Gentleman Mr. Gray contracted an acquaintance very early; and tho' they were not educated together at Eton, yet afterwards at Cambridge, when the Doctor was Fellow of Pembroke-Hall, they became intimate Friends, and continued so to the time of Mr. Gray's death.

† A Servant of the Vice-Chancellor's for the time being, usually known by the name of Blue Coat, whose business it is to attend Acts for Degrees, &c.

you, has not spared his labour, nor could have done more for his own Son) I am got half way to the top of Jurisprudence *, and bid as fair as another body to open a case of impotency with all decency and circumspection. You see my ambition. I do not doubt but some thirty years hence I shall convince the world and you that I am a very pretty young fellow; and may come to shine in a profession, perhaps the noblest of all except man-midwifery. As for you, if your distemper and you can but agree about going to London, I may reasonably expect in a much shorter time to see you in your three-cornered villa, doing the honours of a well-furnished table with as much dignity, as rich a mien, and as capacious a belly, as Dr. Mead. Methinks I see Dr. * *, at the lower end of it, lost in admiration of your goodly person and parts, cramming down his Envy (for it will rise) with the wing of a Pheasant, and drowning it in neat Burgundy. But not to tempt your Asthma too much with such a prospect, I should think you might be almost as happy and as great as this even in the country. But you know best, and I should be sorry to say any thing that might stop you in the career of Glory; far be it from me to hamper the wheels

N O T E.

* *i. e.* Batchelor of Civil Law.

wheels of your gilded chariot. Go on, Sir Thomas; and when you die, (for even Physicians must die) may the faculty in Warwick-lane erect your statue in the very niche of Sir John Cutler's.

I was going to tell you how sorry I am for your illness, but I hope it is too late now: I can only say that I really was very sorry. May you live a hundred Christmasses, and eat as many collars of brawn stuck with rosemary. Adieu, &c.

Though I have said that Mr. Gray, on his return to Cambridge, laid aside Poetry almost entirely, yet I find amongst his papers a small fragment in verse, which bears internal evidence that it was written about this very time. The foregoing Letter, in which he employs so much of his usual vein of ridicule on the University, seems to be no improper introduction to it: I shall therefore insert it here without making any apology, as I have given one, on a similar occasion, in the first section.

It seems to have been intended as a Hymn or Address to Ignorance; and I presume, had he proceeded with it, would

would have contained much good Satire upon false Science and scholastic Pedantry. What he writ of it is purely introductory; yet many of the lines are so strong, and the general cast of the versification so musical, that I believe it will give the generality of Readers a higher opinion of his poetical Talents, than many of his Lyrical Productions have done. I speak of the Generality; because it is a certain fact, that their taste is founded upon the ten-syllable couplets of Dryden and Pope, and upon these only.

HAIL, Horrors, hail! ye ever gloomy bowers,
 Ye gothic fanes, and antiquated towers,
 Where rusby Camus' slowly-winding flood
 Perpetual draws his humid train of mud:
 Glad I revisit thy neglected reign,
 Oh take me to thy peaceful shade again.

But chiefly thee, whose influence breath'd from high
 Augments the native darkness of the sky;
 Ah Ignorance! soft salutary Power!
 Prostrate with filial reverence I adore.
 Thrice hath Hyperion roll'd his annual race,
 Since weeping I forsook thy fond embrace.
 Oh say, successful dost thou still oppose
 Thy leaden Ægis 'gainst our antient foes?

Still

Still stretch, tenacious of thy right divine,
 The massy sceptre o'er thy slumb'ring line?
 And dews Lethean thro' the land dispense
 To steep in slumbers each benighted sense?
 If any spark of Wit's delusive ray
 Break out, and flash a momentary day,
 With damp, cold touch forbid it to aspire,
 And huddle up in fogs the dangerous fire.

Oh say—she hears me not, but careless grown,
 Lethargic nods upon her ebon throne.

Goddeſs! awake, arise, alas my fears!
 Can powers immortal feel the force of years?
 Not thus of old, with ensigns wide unfurl'd,
 She rode triumphant o'er the vanquish'd world;
 Fierce nations own'd her unresisted might,
 And all was Ignorance, and all was Night.

Oh sacred Age! Oh Times for ever lost!
 (The School-man's glory, and the Churchman's
 boast.)

For ever gone—yet still to Fancy new,
 Her rapid wings the transient scene pursue,
 And bring the buried ages back to view.

High on her car, behold the Grandam ride
 Like old Sesostris with barbaric pride;

***** a team of harness'd monarchs bend

LETTER

L E T T E R II.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Peterhouse, April, 26, 1744.

YOU write so feelingly to Mr. Brown, and represent your abandoned condition in terms so touching, that what gratitude could not effect in several months, compassion has brought about in a few days; and broke that strong attachment, or rather allegiance, which I and all here owe to our sovereign Lady and Mistress, the President of Presidents and Head of Heads, (if I may be permitted to pronounce her name, that ineffable Octogrammaton) the power of Laziness. You must know she had been pleased to appoint me (in preference to so many old servants of her's who had spent their whole lives in qualifying themselves for the office) Grand Picker of Straws and Push-pin Player to her Supinity (for that is her title). The first is much in the nature of Lord President of the Council; and the other like the Groom-Porter, only without the profit; but as they are both things of very great honour in this country, I considered with myself the load of Envy attending such great charges; and besides (between you and

and me) I found myself unable to support the fatigue of keeping up the appearance that persons of such dignity must do, so I thought proper to decline it, and excused myself as well as I could. However, as you see such an affair must take up a good deal of time, and it has always been the Policy of this court to proceed slowly, like the Imperial and that of Spain, in the dispatch of Business, you will on this account the easier forgive me, if I have not answered your Letter before.

You desire to know, it seems, what Character the Poem of your young friend bears here *. I wonder that you ask the opinion of a Nation, where those, who pretend to judge, do not judge at all; and the rest (the wiser part) wait to catch the judgment of the world immediately above them; that is, Dick's and the Rainbow Coffee-houses. Your readier way would be to ask the Ladies that keep the Bars in those two theatres
of

N O T E.

* Pleasures of the Imagination: from the posthumous publication of Dr. Akinfide's Poems, it should seem that the Author had very much the same Opinion afterwards of his own Work, which Mr. Gray here expresses: since he undertook a reform of it which must have given him, had he concluded it, as much trouble as if he had written it entirely new.

of Criticism. However, to shew you that I am a judge, as well as my Countrymen, I will tell you, though I have rather turned it over than read it, (but no matter; no more have they) that it seems to me above the middling; and now and then, for a little while, rises even to the best, particularly in description. It is often obscure, and even unintelligible; and too much infected with the Hutchinson jargon. In short, its great fault is, that it was published at least nine years too early. And so methinks in a few words, “à la mode du Temple,” I have very pertly dispatched what perhaps may for several years have employed a very ingenious man worth fifty of myself.

You are much in the right to have a taste for Socrates; he was a divine man. I must tell you, by way of news of the place, that the other day a certain new Professor made an Apology for him an hour long in the schools; and all the world brought in Socrates guilty, except the people of his own College.

The Muse is gone, and left me in far worse company; if she returns, you will hear of her. As to her child *
(since

N O T E.

* He here means his Poem “De Principiis Cogitandi.” See the last Section.

(since you are so good as to enquire after it) it is but a puling chit yet, not a bit grown to speak of; I believe, poor thing, it has got the worms that will carry it off at last. Mr. Trollope and I are in a course of Tar-water; he for his present, and I for my future distempers. If you think it will kill me; send away a man and horse directly; for I drink like a Fish. Yours, &c.

L E T T E R II.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON:

Cambridge, Dec. 11, 1746.

I Would make you an excuse, (as indeed I ought) if they were a sort of thing I ever gave any credit to myself in these cases; but I know they are never true. Nothing so silly as Indolence when it hopes to disguise itself: every one knows it by its saunter, as they do his Majesty (God bless him) at a Masquerade, by the firmness of his tread and the elevation of his chin. However, somewhat I had to say that has a little shadow of reason in it. I have been in Town (I suppose you know) flaunting about at all kind of public places with two friends lately returned from abroad. The world
itself

itself has some attractions in it to a solitary of six years standing ; and agreeable well-meaning people of sense (thank Heaven there are so few of them) are my peculiar Magnet. It is no wonder then if I felt some reluctance at parting with them so soon ; or if my spirits, when I returned back to my cell, should sink for a time, not indeed to storm and tempest, but a good deal below changeable. Besides, Seneca says (and my pitch of philosophy does not pretend to be much above Seneca) "*Nunquam mores, quos extuli, refero.*" "*Aliquid ex eo quod composui, turbatur : aliquid ex*" "*his, quæ fugavi, redit.*" And it will happen to such as us, mere imps of Science. Well it may, when Wisdom herself is forced often

in sweet retired Solitude

To plume her feathers, and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of Resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.

It is a foolish thing that without Money one cannot either live as one pleases, or where and with whom one pleases. Swift somewhere says, that Money is Liberty ; and I fear Money is Friendship too and Society, and almost every external blessing. It is a great, though an ill-natured, Comfort, to see most of those who have

it in plenty, without Pleasure, without Liberty, and without Friends.

I am not altogether of your opinion as to your historical consolation in time of trouble: A calm Melancholy it may produce, a stiller sort of despair (and that only in some circumstances, and on some constitutions); but I doubt no real comfort or content can ever arise in the human mind, but from Hope.

I take it very ill you should have been in the twentieth year of the War*, and yet say nothing of the retreat before Syracuse: Is it, or is it not, the finest thing you ever read in your life? And how does Xenophon or Plutarch agree with you? For my part I read Aristotle, his Poetics, Politics, and Morals; tho' I do not well know which is which. In the first place, he is the hardest author by far I ever meddled with. Then he has a dry conciseness, that makes one imagine one is perusing a table of contents rather than a book: it tastes for all the world like chopped hay, or rather like chopped logic; for he has a violent affection to that art, being in some sort his own invention; so that he

N O T E.

* Thucydides, L. vii.

he often loses himself in little trifling distinctions and verbal niceties; and, what is worse, leaves you to extricate him as well as you can. Thirdly, he has suffered vastly from the transcribblers, as all authors of great brevity necessarily must. Fourthly and lastly, he has abundance of fine uncommon things, which make him well worth the pains he gives one. You see what you are to expect from him.

L E T T E R IV.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. WALPOLE.

Cambridge, 1747.

I Had been absent from this place a few days, and at my return found Cibber's book * upon my table: I return you my thanks for it, and have already run over a considerable part; for who could resist Mrs. Letitia Pilkington's recommendation? (By the way, is there any such gentlewoman †? or has somebody put

F 2

on.

N O T E S.

* Entitled "Observations on Cicero's Character," or some such thing; for I have not the book by me, and it has been long since forgot.

† This Lady made herself more known some time after the date of this letter.

on the style of a scribbling woman's panegyric to deceive and laugh at Colley?) He seems to me full as pert and as dull as usual. There are whole pages of common-place stuff, that for stupidity might have been wrote by Dr. Waterland, or any other grave divine, did not the flirting faucy phrase give them at a distance an air of youth and gaiety: It is very true, he is often in the right with regard to Tully's weaknesses; but was there any one that did not see them? Those, I imagine, that would find a man after God's own heart, are no more likely to trust the Doctor's recommendation than the Player's; and as to Reason and Truth, would they know their own faces, do you think, if they looked in the glass, and saw themselves so bedizened in tattered fringe and tarnished lace, in French jewels, and dirty furbelows, the frippery of a stroller's wardrobe?

Literature, to take it in its most comprehensive sense, and include every thing that requires invention or judgment, or barely application and industry, seems indeed drawing apace to its dissolution, and remarkably since the beginning of the war. I remember to have read Mr. Spence's pretty book; though (as he then had not been at Rome for the last time) it must have increased greatly

greatly since that in bulk. If you ask me what I read, I protest I do not recollect one syllable; but only in general, that they were the best bred sort of men in the world, just the kind of *frinds* one would wish to meet in a fine summer's evening, if one wished to meet any at all. The heads and tails of the dialogues, published separate in 16mo, would make the sweetest reading in *natiur* for young gentlemen of family and fortune, that are learning to dance *. I rejoice to hear there is such a crowd of dramatical performances coming upon the stage. Agrippina can stay very well, she thanks you, and be damned at leisure: I hope in God you have not mentioned, or shewed to any body that scene (for trusting in its badness, I forgot to caution you

N O T E.

* This ridicule on the Platonic way of dialogue (as it was aimed to be, though nothing less resembles it) is, in my opinion, admirable. Lord Shaftsbury was the first who brought it into vogue, and Mr. Spence (if we except a few Scotch writers) the last who practised it. As it has now been laid aside some years, we may hope, for the sake of true taste, that this frippery mode of composition will never come into fashion again; especially since Dr. Hurd has pointed out, by example as well as precept, wherein the true beauty of Dialogue-writing consists.

you concerning it); but I heard the other day, that I was writing a Play, and was told the name of it, which nobody here could know, I am sure. The employment you propose to me much better suits my inclination; but I much fear our joint-stock would hardly compose a small volume; what I have is less considerable than you would imagine, and of that little we should not be willing to publish all. * * * †

This is all I can any where find. You, I imagine, may have a good deal more. I should not care how
unwise

N O T E.

† What is here omitted was a short catalogue of Mr. West's Poetry then in Mr. Gray's hands; the reader has seen as much of it in the three foregoing sections as I am persuaded his friend would have published, had he prosecuted the task which Mr. Walpole recommended to him, that of printing his own and Mr. West's Poems in the same volume; and which we also perceive from this letter, he was not averse from doing. This therefore seems to vindicate the Editor's plan in arranging these papers; as he is enabled by it not only to shew what Mr. West would have been, but what Mr. Gray was, I mean not as a Poet, for that the world knew before, but as an universal Scholar, and (what is still of more consequence) as an excellent moral Man.

unwise the ordinary run of Readers might think my affection for him, provided those few, that ever loved any body, or judged of any thing rightly, might, from such little remains, be moved to consider what he would have been; and to wish that heaven had granted him a longer life and a mind more at ease.

I send you a few lines, though Latin, which you do not like, for the sake of the subject *; it makes part of a large design, and is the beginning of the fourth book, which was intended to treat of the passions. Excuse the three first verses; you know vanity, with the Romans, is a poetical licence.

L E T T E R V.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. WALPOLE.

Cambridge, 1747.

I Have abundance of thanks to return you for the entertainment Mr. Spence's book has given me, which I have almost run over already; and I much fear (see what it is to make a figure) the breadth of
the

N O T E.

* The admirable Apostrophe to Mr. West, see page 65.

the margin, and the neatness of the prints, which are better done than one could expect, have prevailed upon me to like it far better than I did in manuscript; for I think it is not the very genteel deportment of Polymetis, nor the lively wit of Myfagetes, that have at all corrupted me.

There is one fundamental fault, from whence most of the little faults throughout the whole arise. He professes to neglect the Greek writers, who could have given him more instruction on the very heads he professes to treat, than all the others put together; who does not know, that upon the Latin, the Sabine, and Hetruscan mythology (which probably might themselves, at a remoter period of time, owe their origin to Greece too) the Romans ingrafted almost the whole religion of Greece to make what is called their own? It would be hard to find any one circumstance that is properly of their invention. In the ruder days of the republic, the picturesque part of their religion (which is the province he has chose, and would be thought to confine himself to) was probably borrowed entirely from the Tuscans, who, as a wealthy and trading people, may be well supposed, and indeed are known, to have had the arts flourishing in a considerable degree among them.

them. What could inform him here, but Dio. Halicarnassus (who expressly treats of those times with great curiosity and industry) and the remains of the first Roman writers? The former he has neglected as a Greek; and the latter, he says, were but little acquainted with the arts, and consequently are but of small authority. In the better ages, when every temple and public building in Rome was peopled with imported deities and heroes, and when all the artists of reputation they made use of were Greeks, what wonder, if their eyes grew familiarised to Grecian forms and habits (especially in a matter of this kind, where so much depends upon the imagination); and if those figures introduced with them a belief of such fables, as first gave them being, and dressed them out in their various attributes, it was natural then, and (I should think) necessary, to go to the source itself, the Greek accounts of their own religion; but, to say the truth, I suspect he was little conversant in those books and that language; for he rarely quotes any but Lucian, an author that falls in every body's way, and who lived at the very extremity of that period he has set to his enquiries, later than any of the poets he has meddled with, and for that reason ought to have been regarded as but an indifferent authority; especially being a Syrian too. His book (as
he

he says himself) is, I think, rather a beginning than a perfect work; but a beginning at the wrong end: For if any body should finish it by enquiring into the Greek mythology, as he proposes, it will be necessary to read it backward.

There are several little neglects, that one might have told him of, which I noted in reading it hastily; as page 311, a discourse about orange-trees, occasioned by Virgil's "*inter odoratum lauri nemus*," where he fancies the Roman *Laurus* to be our Laurel; tho' undoubtedly the bay-tree, which is *odoratum*, and (I believe) still called *Lauro*, or *Alloro*, at Rome; and that the "*Malum Medicum*" in the Georgick is the orange; tho' Theophrastus, whence Virgil borrowed it, or even Pliny whom he himself quotes, might convince him it is the cedrato which he has often tasted at Florence. Page 144 is an account of Domenichino's Cardinal Virtues, and a fling at the Jesuits, neither of which belong to them: The painting is in a church of the Barnabiti, dedicated to St. Carlo Borromeo, whose motto is *HUMILITAS*. Page 151, in a note, he says, the old Romans did not regard Fortune as a Deity; tho' Servius Tullius (whom she was said to be in love with; nay, there was actually an affair between them) founded

founded her temple in Foro Boario. By the way, her worship was Greek, and this king was educated in the family of Tarquinius Priscus, whose father was a Corinthian; so it is easy to conceive how early the religion of Rome might be mixed with that of Greece, &c. &c.

Dr. Middleton has sent me to-day a book on the Roman Senate, the substance of a dispute between Lord Hervey and him, tho' it never interrupted *their* friendship, he says, and I dare say not.

L E T T E R VI.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. WALPOLE.

Cambridge, March 1, 1747.

AS one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me (before I testify my sorrow, and the sincere part I take in your misfortune) to know for certain, who it is I lament. I knew Zara and Selima, (Selima, was it? or Fatima) or rather I knew them both together; for I cannot justly
say

say which was which. Then as to your handsome Cat, the name you distinguish her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one likes best; or, if one be alive and the other dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest. Besides, if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor: Oh no! I would rather seem to mistake, and imagine to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. Till this affair is a little better determined, you will excuse me if I do not begin to cry;

“*Tempus inane peto, requiem, spatiumque doloris.*”

Which interval is the more convenient, as it gives time to rejoice with you on your new honors*. This is only a beginning; I reckon next week we shall hear you are a Free-Mason, or a Gormogon at least.—Heigh ho! I feel (as you to be sure have done long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it; I do not mean you, but your Cat, feuë Mademoiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize

N O T E.

* Mr. Walpole was about this time elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

mortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows * * * * *,
There's a Poem for you, it is rather too long for an
Epitaph.

L E T T E R VII.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Stoke, June 5, 1748.

YOUR friendship has interested itself in my affairs
so naturally, that I cannot help troubling you a
little with a detail of them †. * * * * * And
now, my dear Wharton, why must I tell you a thing
so contrary to my own wishes and yours? I believe it
is

N O T E S.

* * The reader need hardly be told, that the 4th Ode in
the Collection of his Poems was inserted in the place of
these asterisks. This letter (as some other slight ones have
been) is printed chiefly to mark the date of one of his com-
positions.

† The paragraph here omitted contained an account of
Mr. Gray's loss of a house by fire in Cornhill, and the ex-
pence he should be at in rebuilding it. Though it was in-
sured, he could at this time ill bear to lay out the additional
sum necessary for the purpose.

is impossible for me to see you in the North, or to enjoy any of those agreeable hours I had flattered myself with. This business will oblige me to be in town several times during the summer, particularly in August, when half the money is to be paid; besides the good people here would think me the most careless and ruinous of mortals, if I should take such a journey at this time. The only satisfaction I can pretend to, is that of hearing from you, and particularly at this time when I was bid to expect the good news of an increase of your family. Your opinion of Diodorus is doubtless right; but there are things in him very curious, got out of better authorities now lost. Do you remember the Egyptian history, and particularly the account of the gold mines? My own readings have been cruelly interrupted: What I have been highly pleased with, is the new Comedy from Paris by Gresset, called *le Mechant*; if you have it not, buy his works all together in two little volumes, they are collected by the Dutch booksellers, and consequently contain some trash; but then there are the *Ver-vert*, the *Epistle to P. Bougeant*, the *Chartreuse*, that to his sister, an *Ode on his country*, and another on *Mediocrity*, and the *Sidnei*, another Comedy, all which have great beauties. There is also a Poem lately published by Thompson, called the
Castle

Castle of Indolence, with some good stanzas in it. Mr. Mason is my acquaintance; I liked that Ode* much, but have found no one else that did. He has much fancy, little judgment, and a good deal of modesty; I take him for a good and well-meaning creature; but then he is really in simplicity a child, and loves every body he meets with: He reads little or nothing; writes abundance, and that with a design to make his fortune by it. My best compliments to Mrs.

Wharton

N O T E.

* Ode to a Water Nymph, published about this time in Doddsley's Miscellany. On reading what follows, many readers, I suspect, will think me as simple as ever, in forbearing to expunge the paragraph: But as I publish Mr. Gray's sentiments of authors, as well living as dead, without reserve, I should do them injustice, if I was more scrupulous with respect to myself. My friends, I am sure, will be much amused with this and another passage hereafter of a like sort. My enemies, if they please, may sneer at it; and say (which they will very truly) that twenty-five years have made a very considerable abatement in my general philanthropy. Men of the world will not blame me for writing from so prudent a motive, as that of making my fortune by it; and yet the truth, I believe, at the time was, that I was perfectly well satisfied, if my publications furnished me with a few guineas to see a Play or an Opera.

Wharton and your family: Does that name include any body I am not yet acquainted with?

L E T T E R V I I I .

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Stoke, August 19, 1748.

I Am glad you have had any pleasure in Gresset; he seems to me a truly elegant and charming writer; the *Mechant* is the best Comedy I ever read; his *Edward* I could scarce get through; it is puerile; though there are good lines, such as this for example:

“Le jour d’un nouveau regne est le jour des ingrats.”

But good lines will make any thing rather than a good play: However you are to consider this is a collection made up by the Dutch bookfellers; many things unfinished, or written in his youth, or designed not for the world, but to make his friends laugh, as the *Lutrin vivant*, &c. There are two noble lines, which, as they are in the middle of an Ode to the King, may perhaps have escaped you.

“Le cri d’un peuple heureux est la seule eloquence,

“Qui sçait parler des Rois.”

Which

Which is very true, and should have been a hint to himself not to write Odes to the King at all.

As I have nothing more to say at present, I fill my paper with the beginning of an Essay; what name to give it I know not; but the subject is the Alliance of Education and Government: I mean to shew that they must both concur to produce great and useful men. I desire your judgment upon it before I proceed any further.

The first fifty-seven verses of an Ethical Essay accompanied this letter, which I shall here insert, with about fifty lines more, all of them finished in his highest manner. Had this noble design been compleated, I may, with great boldness, assert that it would have been one of the most capital Poems of the kind that ever appeared either in our own, or any language. I am not able to inform the reader how many Essays he meant to write upon the subject; nor do I believe that he had ever so far settled his plan as to determine that point: But since his theme was as extensive as human nature, (an observation he himself makes in a subsequent letter on the "Esprit des Loix") it is plain the whole work would have been considerable in point of

fize. He was busily employed in it at the time when M. de Montesquieu's book was first published: On reading it, he said the Baron had forestalled some of his best thoughts; and yet the reader will find, from the small fragment he has left, that the two writers differ a little in one very material point, viz. the influence of soil and climate on national manners *. Some time after he had thoughts of resuming his plan, and of dedicating it, by an introductory Ode, to M. de Montesquieu; but that great man's death, which happened in 1755, made him drop his design finally.

On carefully reviewing the scattered papers in prose, which he writ, as hints for his own use in the prosecution of this work, I think it best to form part of them into a kind of commentary at the bottom of the pages; they will serve greatly to elucidate (as far as they go) the method of his reasoning.

ESSAY

N O T E.

* See L'Esprit des Loix, Liv. 14. chap. 2, &c.

E S S A Y I.

—— Πόταγ' ὃ γαθή; τὰν γὰρ αἰοιδὰν
 Οὔτι πω εἰς Αἶδαν γε τὸν ἐκλεάδοντα φυλαξεῖς.

THEOCRITUS.

AS sickly Plants betray a niggard earth,
 Whose barren bosom starves her gen'rous birth,
 Nor genial warmth, nor genial juice retains
 Their roots to feed, and fill their verdant veins :
 And as in climes, where Winter holds his reign, 5
 The soil, tho' fertile, will not teem in vain,

G 2

Forbids

C O M M E N T A R Y.

The Author's subject being (as we have seen) THE NECESSARY ALLIANCE BETWEEN A GOOD FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND A GOOD MODE OF EDUCATION, IN ORDER TO PRODUCE THE HAPPINESS OF MANKIND, the Poem opens with two similes; an uncommon kind of exordium: but which I suppose the Poet intentionally chose, to intimate the analogical method he meant to pursue in his subsequent reasonings: 1st, He asserts that men without education are like sickly plants in a cold or barren soil, (line 1 to 5, and

8

N O T E S.

[*As sickly Plants*, &c. l. 1.] If any copies of this Essay would have authorized me to have made an alteration in the
 disposition

Forbids her gems to swell, her shades to rise,
 Nor trusts her blossoms to the churlish skies :
 So draw Mankind in vain the vital airs,
 Unform'd, unfriended, by those kindly cares, 10
 That health and vigour to the soul impart,
 Spread the young thought, and warm the opening heart :
 So

C O M M E N T A R Y.

8 to 12 ;) and, zdly, he compares them, when unblest with
 a just and well-regulated government, to plants that will not
 blossom or bear fruit in an unkindly and inclement air (l. 5
 to

N O T E S.

disposition of the lines; I would, for the sake of perspicuity,
 have printed the first twelve in the following manner ; be-
 cause I think the poetry would not have been in the least
 hurt by such a transposition, and the Poet's meaning would
 have been much more readily perceived. I put them down
 here for that purpose.

As sickly Plants betray a niggard earth,
 Whose barren bosom starves her gen'rous birth,
 Nor genial warmth, nor genial juice retains
 Their roots to feed, and fill their verdant veins :
 So draw Mankind in vain the vital airs,
 Unform'd, unfriended by those kindly cares,

That

So fond Instruction on the growing powers
 Of nature idly lavishes her stores,
 If equal Justice with unclouded face 15
 Smile not indulgent on the rising race,
 And scatter with a free, tho' frugal hand
 Light golden showers of plenty o'er the land :
 But Tyranny has fix'd her empire there,
 To check their tender hopes with chilling fear, } 20
 And blast the blooming promise of the year.

This spacious animated scene survey,
 From where the rolling Orb, that gives the day,
 His fable sons with nearer course surrounds
 To either pole, and life's remotest bounds. 25
How

C O M M E N T A R Y.

to 9, and l. 13 to 22.) Having thus laid down the two propositions he means to prove, he begins by examining into the characteristics which (taking a general view of mankind) all men have in common one with another (l. 22 to

N O T E S.

That health and vigour to the soul impart,
 Spread the young thought, and warm the opening heart,
 And as in climes, where Winter holds his reign,
 The soil, tho' fertile, will not teem in vain,
 Forbids her gems to swell, her shades to rise,
 Nor trusts her blossoms to the churlish skies :
 So fond Instruction, &c.

How rude foe'er th' exteriour form we find,
 Howe'er opinion tinge the varied mind,
 Alike, to all the kind, impartial Heav'n
 The sparks of truth and happiness has giv'n :
 With sense to feel, with memory to retain, 30
 They follow pleasure, and they fly from pain ;
 Their judgment mends the plan their fancy draws,
 Th' event presages, and explores the cause ;
 The soft returns of gratitude they know,
 By fraud elude, by force repell the foe ; 35
 While mutual wishes, mutual woes endear
 The social smile and sympathetic tear.

Say, then, thro' ages by what fate confin'd
 To different climes seem different souls assign'd ?
 Here measur'd laws and philosophic ease 40
 Fix, and improve the polish'd arts of peace.

There

C O M M E N T A R Y.

to 39); they covet pleasure and avoid pain (l. 31); they feel gratitude for benefits (l. 34); they desire to avenge wrongs, which they effect either by force or cunning (l. 35); they are linked to each other by their common feelings, and participate in sorrow and in joy (l. 36, 37). If then all the human species agree in so many moral particulars, whence arises the diversity of national characters? This question the Poet puts at line 38, and dilates upon to l. 64. Why, says

There industry and gain their vigils keep,
 Command the winds, and tame th' unwilling deep,
 Here force and hardy deeds of blood prevail;
 There languid pleasure sighs in every gale. 45
 Oft o'er the trembling nations from afar
 Has Scythia breath'd the living cloud of war;

And,

C O M M E N T A R Y.

says he, have some nations shewn a propensity to commerce and industry; others to war and rapine; others to ease and pleasure? (l. 42 to 46) Why have the Northern people overspread, in all ages, and prevailed over the Southern? (l. 46

to

N O T E S.

[*Has Scythia breath'd*, &c. l. 47.] The most celebrated of the early irruptions of the Scythians into the neighbouring countries is that under the conduct of Madyes, about the year of the creation 3350, when they broke into Asia, during the reign of Cyaxares, king of the Medes, and conqueror of the Assyrians, plundered it at discretion, and kept possession of it during twenty-eight years. Many successive incursions, attended with every kind of desolation, are enumerated by historians; particularly those, in A. D. 252, during the reign of Gallus and Volusianus, and in 261, under that of Gallienus. Under the Greek Emperors also, to mention only the years 1053 and 1191, it appears that the Scythians still continued their accustomed ravages. In later times,

And, where the deluge burst, with sweepy sway
 Their arms, their kings, their gods were roll'd away.
 As oft have issued, host impelling host, 50
 The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast.

The

C O M M E N T A R Y.

to 58) Why has Asia been, time out of mind, the seat of
 despotism,

N O T E S.

times, the like spirit of sudden and destructive invasion has constantly prevailed; and these same Scythians, under their modern name of Tartars, have, at different periods, overrun Asia, and even some parts of Europe: it is sufficient, on this point, to recall to the reader's memory the names of Gingis-Chan, Ostaï, and Tamerlane.

[*The blue-eyed myriads, &c.* l. 51.] The different nations of Germans, who inhabited or bordered on this coast, have been always distinguished by their various emigrations in search of a better soil and climate, and of a more commodious settlement. The reader will readily recollect the expedition of the Teutones, who joined the Cimbri, when they invaded the Roman territories to the united amount, it is said, of 300,000 fighting men; the many inroads of the Germans into Gaul, under the conduct of Ariovistus; and the numerous irruptions, into the Roman empire, of the Suevi, the Goths, the Vandals, and lastly of the Lombards; most of which nations came originally from the coasts here mentioned.

The prostrate South to the Destroyer yields
 Her boasted titles, and her golden fields :
 With grim delight the Brood of winter view
 A brighter day, and Heav'ns of azure hue, 53
 Scent the new fragrance of the breathing rose,
 And quaff the pendent vintage as it grows.
 Proud of the yoke, and pliant to the rod,
 Why yet does Asia dread a monarch's nod,

While

C O M M E N T A R Y.

despotism, and Europe that of freedom? (l. 59 to 64.) Are we from these instances to imagine men necessarily enslaved to the inconveniencies of the climate where they were born?

(l.

N O T E S.

mentioned. The epithet "blue-eyed" exhibits a distinguishing feature of the ancient Germans: and is particularly remarked by Tacitus and Juvenal. "Truces et cærulei oculi," observes the former, "de Popul: German: cap: 4." and the latter, "Cærulea quis stupuit Germani lumina?" "Sat. 13. ver. 164."

[*With grim delight, &c.* l. 54.] It may not be improper here, after admiring the noble vein of poetical expression and imagery which adorns this description, to relate an incident in itself curious, which shews the propriety of it. The Normans, who came originally from Norway and Scandinavia, having, after a century of ravages, settled themselves

While European freedom still withstands 60
 Th' encroaching tide, that drowns her lessening lands;
 And fees far off with an indignant groan
 Her native plains, and Empires once her own.
 Can opener skies and suns of fiercer flame
 O'erpower the fire, that animates our frame; 65
 As lamps, that shed at eve a chearful ray,
 Fade and expire beneath the eye of day?
 Need we the influence of the Northern star
 To string our nerves and steel our hearts to war?
 And, where the face of nature laughs around, 70
 Must sick'ning virtue fly the tainted ground?
 Unmanly thought! what seasons can controul,
 What fancied zone can circumscribe the soul,

Who,

C O M M E N T A R Y.

(l. 64 to 72) Or are we not rather to suppose there is a natural strength in the human mind, that is able to vanquish and break

N O T E S.

themselves in Neustria (since called Normandy) in 912, were invited into the southern parts of Italy, in the year 1018, by Gaimar prince of Salerno. The Ambassadors, by his particular direction, carried with them a quantity of Citrons, and of other rare fruits, as the most alluring proof of the mildness of the climate. He thought (and the event showed he was right in thinking so) that this "Brood of winter,"

Who, conscious of the source from whence she springs,
 By reason's light; on resolution's wings, 75
 Spite of her frail companion, dauntless goes
 O'er Lybia's deserts and thro' Zembla's snows?
 She bids each slumb'ring energy awake,
 Another touch, another temper take,
 Suspends th' inferiour laws, that rule our clay : 80
 The stubborn elements confess her sway ;
 Their little wants, their low desires, refine,
 And raise the mortal to a height divine.

Not but the human fabric from the birth
 Imbibes a flavour of its parent earth. 85
 As

C O M M E N T A R Y.

break through them? (l. 72 to 84) It is confessed, however, that men receive an early tincture from the situation they are placed in, and the climate which produces them (l. 84 to

N O T E S.

winter," delighted with the taste and fragrance of these delicacies, would the more readily consent to his proposal. [See Leo Ostiensis in his "Chron: Cassin:" and Petavius, "Rationarium Temp: pars: prim: lib: viii."] Mr. Gray's judgment, in what remains to us of this essay, is very remarkable. He borrows from poetry his imagery, his similes, and his expressions; but his thoughts are taken, as the nature of the Poem requires, from history and observation.

As various tracts enforce a various toil,
 The manners speak the idiom of their soil.
 An iron-race the mountain-cliffs maintain,
 Foes to the gentler genius of the plain :
 For where unwearied sinews must be found 90
 With side-long plough to quell the flinty ground,
 To turn the torrent's swift-descending flood,
 To brave the savage rushing from the wood,
 What wonder, if to patient valour train'd
 They guard with spirit, what by strength they gain'd ? 95
 And while their rocky ramparts round they see,
 The rough abode of want and liberty,
 (As lawless force from confidence will grow)
 Insult the plenty of the vales below ?

What

C O M M E N T A R Y .

to 88.) Thus the inhabitants of the mountains, inured to labour and patience, are naturally trained to war (l. 88 to 96); while those of the plain are more open to any attack, and softened by ease and plenty (l. 96 to 99). Again, the Ægyptians, from the nature of their situation, might be the inventors of home-navigation, from a necessity of keeping up an intercourse between their towns during the inundation of the Nile (l. 99 to * * * *). Those persons would naturally have the first turn to commerce, who inhabited a barren coast like the Tyrians, and were persecuted by some neighbouring

What wonder; in the sultry climes, that spread; 100
 Where Nile redundant o'er his summer-bed
 From his broad bosom life and verdure flings,
 And broods o'er Ægypt with his wat'ry wings,
 If with advent'rous oar and ready sail
 The dusky people drive before the gale; 105
 Or

C O M M E N T A R Y.

bouring tyrant; or were drove to take refuge on some shoals, like the Venetian and Hollander; their discovery of some rich island, in the infancy of the world, described. The Tartar hardened to war by his rigorous climate and pastoral life, and by his disputes for water and herbage in a country without land-marks, as also by skirmishes between his rival clans, was consequently fitted to conquer his rich Southern neighbours, whom ease and luxury had enervated: Yet this is no proof that liberty and valour may not exist in Southern climes, since the Syrians and Carthaginians gave noble instances of both; and the Arabians carried their conquests as far

N O T E S.

[*And broods o'er Ægypt, &c.* l. 103.] The image seems to be taken from the figure of Jupiter Pluvius, as represented on the Antonine Pillar. But the whole passage rises to a height beyond the powers either of sculpture or painting to ascend. The critic would, with difficulty, find any description in antiquity, which exceeds this in point of true sublimity.

Or on frail floats to neighb'ring cities ride;
That rise and glitter o'er the ambient tide.

* * * * *

LETTER

COMMENTARY.

far as the Tartars. Rome also (for many centuries) repulsed those very nations, which, when she grew weak, at length demolished * her extensive Empire. * * * *

NOTES.

[*That rise and glitter o'er the ambient tide*, l. 107.] The foregoing account of the river Nile, while it is embellished with all the graces of description, is given at the same time in exact conformity to truth and reality; as the reader will observe from the following citation:—"Le Nil portoit par
" tout la fécondité avec ses eaux salutaires, unissoit les villes
" entre elles, & la grande mer avec la mer rouge, entrete-
" noit le commerce au dedans & au dehors du Royaume, &
" le fortifioit contre l'ennemi: de sorte qu'il étoit tout en-
" semble et le nourricier, & le défenseur de l'Egypte. On
" lui abandonnoit la campagne: mais les villes, rehaussées
" avec des travaux immenses, & s'élevant comme des Iles
" au milieu des eaux, regardoient avec joye de cette hauteur
" toute la plaine inondée & tout ensemble fertilisée par le
" Nil." *Bossuet, Disc: sur l'Hist: trois: part:*

* The Reader will perceive that the Commentary goes further than the Text. The reason for which is, that the Editor found it so on the paper from which he formed that
comment;

L E T T E R IX.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Cambridge, March 9, 1749.

YOU ask for some account of books. The principal I can tell you of is a work of the President Montesquieu, the labour of twenty years; it is called *L'Esprit des Loix*, 2 vol. 4to, printed at Geneva. He
lays

comment; and as the thoughts seemed to be those which Mr. Gray would have next graced with the harmony of his numbers, he held it best to give them in continuation. There are other maxims on different papers, all apparently relating to the same subject, which are too excellent to be lost; these therefore (as the place in which he meant to employ them cannot be ascertained) I shall subjoin to this note, under the title of detached Sentiments.

“Man is a creature not capable of cultivating his mind but in society, and in that only where he is not a slave to the necessities of life.

Want is the mother of the inferior arts, but Ease that of the finer; as eloquence, policy, morality, poetry, sculpture, painting, architecture, which are the improvements of the former.

The

lays down the principles on which are founded the three sorts of government, Despotism, the limited Monarchy, and the Republican; and shews how from these are deduced the laws and customs by which they are guided

The climate inclines some nations to contemplation and pleasure; others to hardship, action, and war; but not so as to incapacitate the former for courage and discipline, or the latter for civility, politeness, and works of genius.

It is the proper work of education and government united to redress the faults that arise from the soil and air.

The principal drift of education should be to make men *think* in the Northern climates, and *act* in the Southern.

The different steps and degrees of education may be compared to the artificer's operations upon marble; it is one thing to dig it out of the quarry, and another to square it; to give it gloss and lustre, call forth every beautiful spot and vein, shape it into a column, or animate it into a statue.

To a native of free and happy governments his country is always dear:

“ He loves his old hereditary trees.” COWLEY.

While the subject of a tyrant has no country; he is therefore selfish and base-minded; he has no family, no posterity, no desire of fame; or, if he has, of one that turns not on its proper object.

Any

guided and maintained; the education proper to each form; the influence of climate, situation, religion, &c. on the minds of particular nations and on their policy. The subject, you see, is as extensive as mankind; the

VOL. III.

H

thoughts

Any nation that wants public spirit, neglects education, ridicules the desire of fame, and even of virtue and reason, must be ill governed.

Commerce changes intirely the fate and genius of nations, by communicating arts and opinions, circulating money, and introducing the materials of luxury; she first opens and polishes the mind, then corrupts and enervates both that and the body.

Those invasions of effeminate Southern nations by the warlike Northern people, seem (in spite of all the terror, mischief, and ignorance which they brought with them) to be necessary evils; in order to revive the spirit of mankind, softened and broken by the arts of commerce, to restore them to their native liberty and equality, and to give them again the power of supporting danger and hardship; so a comet, with all the horrors that attend it as it passes through our system, brings a supply of warmth and light to the sun, and of moisture to the air.

The doctrine of Epicurus is ever ruinous to society: It had its rise when Greece was declining, and perhaps hastened its dissolution,

thoughts perfectly new, generally admirable as they are just, sometimes a little too refined. In short, there are faults, but such as an ordinary man could never have committed. The style very lively and concise (consequently

dissolution, as also that of Rome; it is now propagated in France and in England, and seems likely to produce the same effect in both.

One principal characteristic of vice in the present age is the contempt of fame.

Many are the uses of good fame to a generous mind: it extends our existence and example into future ages; continues and propagates virtue, which otherwise would be as short-lived as our frame; and prevents the prevalence of vice in a generation more corrupt even than our own. It is impossible to conquer that natural desire we have of being remembered; even criminal ambition and avarice, the most selfish of all passions, would wish to leave a name behind them."

I find also among these papers a single couplet much too beautiful to be lost, though the place where he meant to introduce it cannot be ascertained; it must, however, have made a part of some description of the effect which the reformation had on our national manners:

When Love could teach a monarch to be wise,
And Gospel-light first dawn'd from BULLEN's Eyes.

Thus,

quently sometimes obscure); it is the gravity of Tacitus, whom he admires, tempered with the gaiety and fire of a Frenchman. The time of night will not suffer me to go on; but I will write again in a week.

H 2

LETTER

Thus, with all the attention that a connoisseur in painting employs in collecting every slight out line as well as finished drawing which led to the completion of some capital picture, I have endeavoured to preserve every fragment of this great poetical design. It surely deserved this care, as it was one of the noblest which Mr. Gray ever attempted; and also, as far as he carried it into execution, the most exquisitely finished. That he carried it no further is, and must ever be, a most sensible loss to the republic of letters.

L E T T E R X.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Cambridge, April 25, 1749.

I Perceive that second parts are as bad to write as they can be to read; for this, which you ought to have had a week after the first, has been a full month in coming forth. The spirit of laziness (the spirit of the place) begins to possess even me, who have so long declaimed against it; yet has it not so prevailed, but that I feel that discontent with myself, that ennui, that ever accompanies it in its beginnings. Time will settle my conscience; time will reconcile me to this languid companion: We shall smoke, we shall tipple, we shall doze together: We shall have our little jokes like other people, and our old stories: Brandy will finish what Port began; and a month after the time you will see in some corner of a London Evening-Post, "Yesterday died the Reverend Mr. John Gray, Senior Fellow of Clare-Hall, a facetious companion, and well respected by all that knew him. His death is supposed to have been occasioned by a fit of an apoplexy, being found fallen out of bed with his head in the chamber-pot."

In

In the meanwhile, to go on with my account of new books. Montesquieu's work, which I mentioned before, is now publishing anew in 2 vols. 8vo. Have you seen old Crebillon's *Catalina*, a Tragedy, which has had a prodigious run at Paris? Historical truth is too much perverted in it, which is ridiculous in a story so generally known; but if you can get over this, the sentiments and versification are fine, and most of the characters (particularly the principal one) painted with great spirit.

Mr. Birch, the indefatigable, has just put out a thick octavo of original papers of Queen Elizabeth's time; there are many curious things in it, particularly letters from Sir Robert Cecil (Salisbury) about his negotiations with Henry IV. of France, the Earl of Monmouth's odd account of Queen Elizabeth's death, several peculiarities of James I. and Prince Henry, &c. and above all, an excellent account of the state of France, with characters of the king, his court, and ministry, by Sir George Carew, ambassador there. This, I think, is all new worth mentioning, that I have seen or heard of; except a *Natural History of Peru*, in Spanish, printed at London, by Don ——— something, a man of learning, sent thither by that court on purpose.

You

You ask after my chronology. It was begun, as I told you, almost two years ago, when I was in the midst of Diogenes Laertius and his Philosophers, as a procemium to their works. My intention in forming this table was not so much for public events, though these too have a column assigned them, but rather in a literary way to compare the time of all great men, their writings and their transactions. I have brought it from the 30th Olympiad, where it begins, to the 113th; that is, 332 years *. My only modern assistants were Marsham, Dodwell, and Bentley.

I have since that read Pausanias and Athenæus all through, and Æschylus again. I am now in Pindar and Lyfias; for I take verse and prose together like bread and cheese.

LETTER

N O T E.

* This laborious work was formed much in the manner of the President Henault's "*Histoire de France*." Every page consisted of nine columns; one for the Olympiad, the next for the Archons, the third for the public affairs of Greece, the three next for the Philosophers, and the three last for Poets, Historians, and Orators. I do not find it carried further than the date above-mentioned.

L E T T E R X I.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Cambridge, August 8, 1749.

I Promised Dr. Keene long since to give you an account of our magnificences here *; but the newspapers and he himself in person, have got the start of my indolence, so that by this time you are well acquainted with all the events that adorned that week of wonders. Thus much I may venture to tell you, because it is probable nobody else has done it, that our friend * *’s zeal and eloquence surpassed all power of description. Vesuvio in an eruption was not more violent than his utterance, nor (since I am at my mountains) Pelion, with all its pine-trees in a storm of wind, more impetuous than his action; and yet the Senate-House still stands, and (I thank God) we are all safe and well at your service. I was ready to sink for him, and scarce dared to look about me, when I was sure it was all over; but soon found I might have spared my confusion; all people joined to applaud him. Every thing

N O T E.

† The Duke of Newcastle’s Installation as Chancellor of the University.

thing was quite right; and I dare swear not three people here but think him a model of oratory; for all the Duke's little court came with a resolution to be pleased; and when the tone was once given, the university, who ever wait for the judgment of their betters, struck into it with an admirable harmony: for the rest of the performances, they were just what they usually are. Every one, while it lasted, was very gay and very busy in the morning, and very owlish and very tipsy at night: I make no exceptions from the Chancellor to Blue-coat. Mason's Ode was the only entertainment that had any tolerable elegance; and, for my own part, I think it (with some little abatements) uncommonly well on such an occasion. Pray let me know your sentiments; for doubtless you have seen it. The author of it grows apace into my good graces, as I know him more; he is very ingenious, with great good-nature and simplicity; a little vain, but in so harmless and so comical a way, that it does not offend one at all; a little ambitious, but withal so ignorant in the world and its ways, that this does not hurt him in one's opinion; so sincere and so undisguised, that no mind, with a spark of generosity, would ever think of hurting him, he lies so open to injury; but so indolent, that if he cannot overcome this habit, all his good qualities will signify nothing

thing at all. After all, I like him so well, I could wish you knew him.

L E T T E R X I I .

Mr. GRAY to his MOTHER.

Cambridge, Nov. 7, 1749.

THE unhappy news I have just received from you equally surprizes and afflicts me *. I have lost a person I loved very much, and have been used to from my infancy ; but am much more concerned for your loss, the circumstances of which I forbear to dwell upon, as you must be too sensible of them yourself ; and will, I fear, more and more need a consolation that no one can give, except He who has preserved her to you so many years, and at last, when it was his pleasure, has taken her from us to himself : and perhaps,

N O T E .

* The death of his aunt, Mrs. Mary Antrobus, who died the 5th of November, and was buried in a vault in Stoke church-yard near the chancel door, in which also his mother and himself (according to the direction in his will) were afterwards buried.

haps, if we reflect upon what she felt in this life, we may look upon this as an instance of his goodness both to her, and to those that loved her. She might have languished many years before our eyes in a continual increase of pain, and totally helpless; she might have long wished to end her misery without being able to attain it; or perhaps even lost all sense, and yet continued to breathe; a sad spectacle to such as must have felt more for her than she could have done for herself. However you may deplore your own loss, yet think that she is at last easy and happy; and has now more occasion to pity us than we her. I hope, and beg, you will support yourself with that resignation we owe to him, who gave us our being for our good, and who deprives us of it for the same reason. I would have come to you directly, but you do not say whether you desire I should or not; if you do, I beg I may know it, for there is nothing to hinder me, and I am in very good health.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIII.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Stoke, August 9, 1750.

ARISTOTLE says (one may write Greek to you without scandal) that Οἱ τοποὶ οὐ διαλύουσι τὴν Φιλίαν ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν· εἰὰν δὲ χρόνιος ἡ ἀπουσία γίνηται καὶ τῆς Φιλίας δοκεῖ λήθην ποιεῖν. ὅθεν εἰρηται

Πολλὰς δὲ Φιλίας ἀπροσηγορία διέλυσε.

But Aristotle may say whatever he pleases, I do not find myself at all the worse for it. I could indeed wish to refresh my *ἑνέργεια* a little at Durham by the sight of you, but when is there a probability of my being so happy? It concerned me greatly when I heard the other day that your asthma continued at times to afflict you, and that you were often obliged to go into the country to breathe; you cannot oblige me more than by giving me an account both of the state of your body and mind: I hope the latter is able to keep you chearful and easy in spite of the frailties of its companion. As to my own, it can neither do one nor the other; and I have the mortification to find my spiritual part the most infirm thing about me. You have doubtless heard of
the

the loss I have had in Dr. Middleton, whose house was the only easy place one could find to converse in at Cambridge: For my part I find a friend so uncommon a thing, that I cannot help regretting even an old acquaintance, which is an indifferent likeness of it; and though I do not approve the spirit of his books, methinks 'tis pity the world should lose so rare a thing as a good writer*.

My studies cannot furnish a recommendation of many new books to you. There is a defence "*de l'Esprit des Loix*," by Montesquieu himself; it has some lively things in it, but is very short, and his adversary appears to be so mean a bigot that he deserved no answer. There are 3 vols. in 4to of "*Histoire du Cabinet du Roy*, by Messrs. Buffons and d'Aubenton;" the first is a man of character, but I am told has hurt it by this work. It is all a sort of introduction to natural history; the weak part of it is a love of system which runs through it; the most contrary thing in the world to a science entirely grounded upon experiments, and which

N O T E.

* Mr. Gray used to say, that good writing not only required great parts, but the very best of those parts.

which has nothing to do with † vivacity of imagination. However I cannot help commending the general view which he gives of the face of the earth, followed by a particular one of all the known nations, their peculiar figure and manners, which is the best epitome of geography I ever met with, and written with sense and elegance; in short, these books are well worth turning over. The Memoirs of the Abbé de Mongon, in 5 vols. are highly commended, but I have not seen them. He was engaged in several embassies to Germany, England, &c. during the course of the late war. The President Henault's "Abregé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France," I believe I have before mentioned to you as a very good book of its kind.

About this time Mr. Gray had put his last hand to his celebrated Elegy in the Country Church-yard, and had communicated it to his friend Mr. Walpole, whose good taste was too much charmed with it to suffer him to withhold the sight of it from his acquaintance; accordingly

N O T E.

† One cannot therefore help lamenting, that Mr. Gray let his imagination lie dormant so frequently, in order to apply himself to this very science.

cordingly it was shewn about for some time in manuscript, (as Mr. Gray intimates in the subsequent letter to Dr. Wharton) and received with all the applause it so justly merited. Amongst the rest of the fashionable world, for to these only it was at present communicated, Lady Cobham, who now lived at the mansion-house at Stoke-Pogis, had read and admired it. She wished to be acquainted with the author; accordingly her relation Miss Speed and Lady Schaub, then at her house, undertook to bring this about by making him the first visit. He happened to be from home, when the Ladies arrived at his Aunt's solitary mansion; and, when he returned, was surprized to find, written on one of his papers in the parlour where he usually read, the following note: "Lady Schaub's compliments to Mr. Gray; she is
 " sorry not to have found him at home, to tell him
 " that Lady Brown is very well." This necessarily obliged him to return the visit, and soon after induced him to compose a ludicrous account of this little adventure, for the amusement of the Ladies in question. He wrote it in ballad measure, and entitled it a Long Story: when it was handed about in manuscript, nothing could be more various than the opinions concerning it; by some it was thought a master-piece of original humour, by others a wild and fantastic farrago; and

and when it was published, the sentiments of good judges were equally divided about it. How it came to be printed I shall mention hereafter; and also inform the reader why Mr. Gray rejected it in the collection which he himself made of his Poems: In the meanwhile, as I think it ought to have a place in these Memoirs, for reasons too obvious to insist upon, I shall beg leave to preface it with my own idea of the author's peculiar vein of humour; which, with my notes on the piece itself, may perhaps account in some sort for the variety of opinions which people of acknowledged taste have formed concerning it.

Mr. Gray had not (in my opinion) either in his conversation or writing much of what is called *pure* humour; it was always so much blended either with wit, fancy, or his own peculiar character, that it became equivocal, and hence not adapted to please generally: It had more of the manner of Congreve than Addison; and we know where one person relishes my Lady Wishfort, there are thousands that admire Sir Roger de Coverley: It will not however from hence follow, that Lady Wishfort is ill drawn; for my own part I think it one of the most entertaining characters that ever was written. I know, however, that it is commonly

mōnly thought extravagant and unnatural ; and I believe it is true, that no woman ever existed who had so much folly and affectation, and at the same time so much wit and fancy ; yet every one sees that were this fancy and wit taken away, her character would become insipid, in proportion as it became more natural ; so that, in this and other instances, *if Congreve's fools were fools indeed*, they would, by being *true* characters, cease to be *entertaining* ones. It may be further observed on the subject of humour, that it may and ought to be divided into several species : there is one sort, that of Terence's, which simply pleases without forcing a smile ; another, like Mr. Addison's, which not only pleases, but makes us smile into the bargain. Shakespear's, Swift's, Congreve's, and Prior's usually goes further, and makes us laugh : I infer not from hence that this latter sort is the best : I only assert, that howsoever it may be mixt with other ingredients, it ought also to be called Humour. The critic, however, who judges by rule, and who will not be pleased unless legitimately, will be apt to condemn this species of mixt humour ; and the common reader will not always have either wit or imagination enough to comprehend or taste it. But I have said Mr. Gray not only mixed wit and fancy with his humour, but also his own particular character ; and
 being

being naturally delicate, and at times even fastidious, his humour generally took the same cast; and would therefore be only relished by such of his friends, as, conscious of his superior excellencies, thought this defect not only pardonable but entertaining, which a character of this sort (being humorous in itself) always is, when it is not carried to any offensive extreme. Yet as this observation relates only to his conversation and familiar letters, (for to these only it can be applied) I have no occasion to insist on it further; and shall only add, that whatever the generality of readers may think of Mr. Gray's talent in this way, there will always be some, and those far from the lowest class, to whom it will appear excellent: for humour may be true, when it ceases to be pure or unmixed, if the ingredients which go to its composition be true also. False wit and a wild fancy would debase the best humour in the world, as they frequently do in Rabelais and Sterne (without taking more exceptionable matters into consideration); but when genuine, they serve to heighten and embellish it.

A L O N G S T O R Y.

IN Britain's isle, no matter where,
^a An antient pile of building stands :
 The Huntingdons and Hattons there
 Employ'd the pow'r of Fairy hands
 To raise the ceiling's fretted height,
 Each pannel in achievements cloathing,
 Rich windows that exclude the light,
 And passages, that lead to nothing.
 Full oft within the spacious walls,
 When he had fifty winters o'er him,
^b My grave Lord-Keeper led the brawls ;
 The seal and maces danc'd before him.

His

N O T E S.

^a The mansion-house at Stoke-Pogis, then in the possession of Viscountess Cobham. The style of building, which we now call Queen Elizabeth's, is here admirably described, both with regard to its beauties and defects ; and the third and fourth stanzas delineate the fantastic manners of her time with equal truth and humour. The house formerly belonged to the Earls of Huntingdon and the family of Hatton.

^b Sir Christopher Hatton, promoted by Queen Elizabeth for his graceful person and fine dancing. G.—Brawls were a sort of figure-dance, then in vogue, and probably deemed as elegant as our modern Cotillions, or still more modern Quadrilles.

His bushy beard, and shoe-strings green,
 His high-crown'd hat, and sattin doublet,
 Mov'd the stout heart of England's Queen,
 Though Pope and Spaniard could not trouble it.

What, in the very first beginning !
 Shame of the versifying tribe !
 Your hist'ry whither are you spinning !
 Can you do nothing but describe ?

A house there is (and that's enough)
 From whence one fatal morning issues
 * A brace of warriors, not in buff,
 But rustling in their silks and tiffues.

The first came cap-a-pee from France,
 Her conqu'ring destiny fulfilling,
 Whom meaner beauties eye askance,
 And vainly ape her art of killing.

The other Amazon kind heav'n
 Had arm'd with spirit, wit, and satire :
 But Cobham had the polish giv'n,
 And tip'd her arrows with good-nature.

I 2

To

N O T E.

* The reader is already apprized who these Ladies were ;
 the two descriptions are prettily contrasted ; and nothing can
 be more happily turned than the compliment to Lady Cob-
 ham in the eighth stanza.

To celebrate her eyes, her air——
Coarse panegyrics would but tease her.
Melissa is her *Nom de Guerre*.

Alas, who would not wish to please her !

With bonnet blue and capuchine,
And aprons long they hid their armour,
And veil'd their weapons bright and keen
In pity to the country farmer.

Fame in the shape of ^d Mr. P—t
(By this time all the parish know it)
Had told, that thereabouts there lurk'd
A wicked Imp they call a Poet :

Who prowld the country far and near,
Bewitch'd the children of the peasants,
Dried up the cows, and lam'd the deer,
And suck'd the eggs, and kill'd the pheasants.

My Lady heard their joint petition,
Swore by her coronet and ermine,
She'd issue out her high commission
To rid the manor of such vermin.

The

N O T E.

^d I have been told that this Gentleman, a neighbour and acquaintance of Mr. Gray's in the country, was much displeased at the liberty here taken with his name ; yet, surely, without any great reason.

The Heroines undertook the task,
Thro' lanes unknown, o'er stiles they ventur'd,
Rap'd at the door, nor stay'd to ask,
But bounce into the parlour enter'd.

The trembling family they daunt,
They flirt, they sing, they laugh, they tattle,
Rummage his Mother, pinch his Aunt,
And up stairs in a whirlwind rattle.

Each hole and cupboard they explore,
Each creek and cranny of his chamber,
Run hurry-skurry round the floor,
And o'er the bed and tester clamber ;

Into the drawers and china pry,
Papers and books, a huge imbroglio !
Under a tea-cup he might lie,
Or creased, like dogs-ears, in a folio.

On the first marching of the troops,
The Muses, hopeless of his pardon,
Convey'd him underneath their hoops
To a small closet in the garden.

So Rumor says : (Who will, believe.)
But that they left the door a-jar,
Where, safe and laughing in his sleeve,
He heard the distant din of war.

Short

Short was his joy. He little knew
 The pow'r of Magic was no fable ;
 Out of the window, whisk, they flew,
 * But left a spell upon the table.

The

N O T E.

* Fancy is here so much blended with the humour, that I believe the two stanzas which succeed this line, are among those which are the least relished by the generality. The description of the spell, I know, has appeared to many persons absolutely unintelligible ; yet if the reader adverts to that peculiar idea which runs through the whole, I imagine the obscurity complained of will be removed. An incident, we see, so slight as the simple matter of fact, required something like machinery to enliven it : Accordingly the author chose, with propriety enough, to employ for that purpose those notions of witchcraft, ghosts, and enchantment, which prevailed at the time when the mansion-house was built. He describes himself as a dæmon of the lowest class, *a wicked imp who lamed the deer, &c.* against whose malevolent power Lady Cobham (the Gloriana of the piece) employs two superior enchantresses. Congruity of imagery, therefore, required the card they left upon the table to be converted into a spell. Now all the old writers, on these subjects, are very minute in describing the materials of such talismans. Hence, therefore, his grotesque idea of a composition of transparent bird-lime,

The words too eager to unriddle,
 The Poet felt a strange disorder :
 Transparent bird-lime form'd the middle,
 And chains invisible the border.

So cunning was the Apparatus,
 The powerful pot-hooks did so move him,
 That, will he, nill he, to the Great-house
 He went, as if the Devil drove him.

† Yet on his way (no sign of grace,
 For folks in fear are apt to pray)

To

N O T E S.

bird-lime, edged with invisible chains in order to catch and draw him to the tribunal. Without going further for examples of this kind of imagery than the Poet's own works, let me instance two passages of the serious kind, similar to this ludicrous one. In his Ode, entitled the Bard,

“ Above, below, the rose of snow, &c.”

And, again, in the Fatal Sisters,

“ See the griesly texture grow.”

It must, however, be allowed, that no person can fully relish this burlesque, who is not much conversant with the old romance-writers, and with the Poets who formed themselves on their model.

† The humour of this and the following stanza is more pure, and consequently more obvious. It might have been written by Prior, and the wit at the end is much in his best manner.

To Phœbus he prefer'd his case,
And beg'd his aid that dreadful day.

The Godhead wou'd have back'd his quarrel;
But with a blush on recollection,
Own'd, that his quiver and his laurel
'Gainst four such eyes were no protection.

The court was fate, the Culprit there,
Forth from their gloomy mansions creeping
* The Lady Janes and Joans repair,
And from the gallery stand peeping :

Such as in silence of the night
Come (sweep) along some winding entry,
^b (Styack has often seen the sight)
Or at the chapel-door stand centry :

In

N O T E S.

* Here Fancy is again uppermost, and soars as high on her comic, as on another occasion she does on her lyric wing: For now a Chorus of ghostly old women of quality come to give sentence on the culprit Poet, just as the spirits of Cadwallo, Urien, and Hoel join the Bard in dreadful symphony to denounce vengeance on Edward I. The route of Fancy, we see, is the same both on the humorous and sublime occasion. No wonder, therefore, if either of them should fail of being generally tasted.

^b The House-Keeper. G.

¹ In peaked hoods and mantles tarnish'd,
Sour visages, enough to scare ye,
High dames of honour once, that garnish'd
The drawing-room of fierce Queen Mary.

The Peerefs comes. The audience stare,
And doff their hats with due submission;
She curtsies, as she takes her chair,
To all the people of condition.

The Bard, with many an artful fib,
Had in imagination fenc'd him,
Disprov'd the arguments of ^k Squib,
And all that ¹ Groom could urge against him.

But soon his rhetorick forsook him,
When he the solemn hall had seen;
A sudden fit of ague shook him,
He stood as mute as poor ^m Macleane.

Yet

N O T E S.

¹ The description is here excellent, and I should think would please universally.

^k Groom of the Chamber. G.

¹ The Steward. G.

^m A famous Highwayman hanged the week before. G.—

This stanza is of the sort where wit rather than fancy prevails, consequently much in Prior's manner.

Yet something he was heard to mutter,
 " How in the Park beneath an old tree
 " (Without design to hurt the butter,
 " Or any malice to the poultry,)
 " He once or twice had pen'd a sonnet ;
 " Yet hop'd, that he might save his bacon ;
 " Numbers would give their oaths upon it,
 " He ne'er was for a conj'rer taken."

The ghostly prudes with ⁿ hagg'd face
 Already had condemn'd the finner.
 My Lady rose, and with a grace——
 ° She smil'd, and bid him come to dinner.

" Jesu-

N O T E S.

ⁿ Hagg'd, *i. e.* the face of a witch or Hag ; the epithet Haggard has been sometimes mistaken, as conveying the same idea ; but it means a very different thing, viz. wild and farouche, and is taken from an unreclaimed hawk, called an Haggard ; in which its proper sense the Poet uses it finely on a sublime occasion :

Cloath'd in the fable garb of woe,
 With haggard eyes the Poet stood.

Vide Ode 6th.

° Here the story finishes ; the exclamation of the Ghosts which follows is characteristic of the Spanish manners of the age, when they are supposed to have lived ; and the 500 stanzas, said to be lost, may be imagined to contain the remainder of their long-winded expostulation.

“ Jesu-Maria ! Madam Bridget,
 “ Why, what can the Viscountess mean ?
 (Cried the square-hoods in woeful fidget)
 “ The times are alter’d quite and clean !
 “ Decorum’s turn’d to mere civility ;
 “ Her air and all her manners shew it.
 “ Commend me to her affability !
 “ Speak to a Commoner and Poet !”

[Here 500 Stanzas are lost.]

And so God save our noble King,
 And guard us from long-winded Lubbers,
 That to eternity would sing,
 And keep my Lady from her Rubbers.

L E T T E R XIV.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Dec. 17, 1750.

OF my house I cannot say much †, I wish I could ;
 but for my heart it is no less yours than it has
 long been ; and the last thing in the world that will
 throw

N O T E.

† The house he was rebuilding in Cornhill. See Letter
 VII. of this Section,

throw it into tumults is a fine Lady. The verses, you so kindly try to keep in countenance, were written merely to divert Lady Cobham and her family, and succeeded accordingly; but being shewed about in town are not liked there at all. Mrs. *, a very fashionable personage, told Mr. Walpole that she had seen a thing by a friend of his which she did not know what to make of, for it aimed at every thing, and meant nothing; to which he replied, that he had always taken her for a woman of sense, and was very sorry to be undeceived. On the other hand, the stanzas † which I now inclose to you have had the misfortune, by Mr. Walpole's fault, to be made still more public, for which they certainly were never meant; but it is too late to complain. They have been so applauded, it is quite a shame to repeat it: I mean not to be modest; but it is a shame for those who have said such superlative things about them, that I cannot repeat them. I should have been glad that you and two or three more people had liked them, which would have satisfied my ambition on this head amply. I have been this month in town, not at Newcastle-House; but diverting myself among my gay acquaintance, and return to my cell
with

N O T E.

† Elegy in a Country Church-Yard.

with so much the more pleasure. I dare not speak of my future excursion to Durham for fear of a disappointment, but at present it is my full intention.

L E T T E R XV.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. WALPOLE.

Cambridge, Feb. 11, 1751.

AS you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the Magazine of Magazines into their hands: They tell me that an *ingenious* Poem, called reflections in a Country Church-Yard, has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith; that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, &c. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and therefore am obliged to
 desire

desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy, but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him, but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be,—Elegy, written in a Country Church-Yard. If he would add a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the Magazine of Magazines in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone.

L E T T E R XVI.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Dec. 19, 1752.

HAVE you read Madame de Maintenon's letters? They are undoubtedly genuine; they begin very early in her life, before she married Scarron, and continue

tinue after the king's death to within a little while of her own : they bear all the marks of a noble spirit (in her adversity particularly) of virtue and unaffected devotion ; infomuch, that I am almost persuaded she was actually married to Lewis the XIV. and never his Mistress : and this not out of any policy or ambition, but conscience : for she was what we should call a bigot, yet with great good sense : In short, she was too good for a court. Misfortunes in the beginning of her life had formed her mind (naturally lively and impatient) to reflection and a habit of piety. She was always miserable while she had the care of Madame de Montespan's children ; timid and very cautious of making use of that unlimited power she rose to afterwards, for fear of trespassing on the king's friendship for her ; and after his death not at all afraid of meeting her own.

I do not know what to say to you with regard to Racine ; it sounds to me as if any body should fall upon Shakespear, who indeed lies infinitely more open to criticism of all kinds ; but I should not care to be the person that undertook it. If you do not like Athaliah or Britannicus, there is no more to be said. I have done.

Bishop

Bishop Hall's satires, called *Virgidemiæ*, are lately republished. They are full of spirit and poetry; as much of the first as Dr. Donne, and far more of the latter: they were written at the university when he was about twenty-three years old, and in Queen Elizabeth's time.

You do not say whether you have read the *Crito* *. I only recommend the dramatic part of the *Phædo* to you, not the argumentative. The subject of the *Eraftæ* is good, it treats of that peculiar character and turn of mind which belongs to a true philosopher, but it is shorter than one would wish. The *Euthyphro* I would not read at all.

L E T T E R XVII.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. WALPOLE.

Stoke, Jan. 1753.

I Am at present at Stoke, to which place I came at half an hour's warning upon the news I received of my mother's illness, and did not expect to have found her

N O T E.

* Of Plato.

her alive; but when I arrived she was much better, and continues so. I shall therefore be very glad to make you a visit at Strawberry-Hill, whenever you give me notice of a convenient time. I am surprized at the print *, which far surpasses my idea of London gravings: The drawing itself was so finished, that I suppose it did not require all the art I had imagined to copy it tolerably. My aunts seeing me open your letter, took it to be a burying-ticket, and asked whether any body had left me a ring; and so they still conceive it to be, even with all their spectacles on. Heaven forbid they should suspect it to belong to any verses of mine, they would

VOL. III.

K

burn

N O T E.

* A proof print of the Cul de Lampe, which Mr. Bentley designed for the Elegy in a country church-yard, and which represents a village-funeral; this occasioned the pleasant mistake of his two aunts. The remainder of the letter relates entirely to the projected publication of Mr. Bentley's designs, which were printed after by Dodsley this same year. The latter part of it, where he so vehemently declares against having his head prefixt to that work, will appear highly characteristical to those readers, who were personally acquainted with Mr. Gray. The print, which was taken from an original picture, painted by Echart, in Mr. Walpole's possession, was actually more than half engraved; but afterwards on this account suppressed.

burn me for a poet. On my own part I am satisfied, if this design of yours succeed so well as you intend it; and yet I know it will be accompanied with something not at all agreeable to me.—While I write this, I receive your second letter.—Sure, you are not out of your wits! This I know, if you suffer my head to be printed, you will infallibly put me out of mine. I conjure you immediately to put a stop to any such design. Who is at the expence of engraving it, I know not; but if it be Doddsley, I will make up the loss to him. The thing as it was, I know, will make me ridiculous enough; but to appear in proper person, at the head of my works, consisting of half a dozen ballads in thirty pages, would be worse than the pillory. I do assure you, if I had received such a book, with such a frontispiece, without any warning, I believe it would have given me a palsy: Therefore I rejoice to have received this notice, and shall not be easy till you tell me all thoughts of it are laid aside. I am extremely in earnest, and cannot bear even the idea.

I had written to Doddsley if I had not received yours, to tell him how little I liked the title which he meant to prefix; but your letter has put all that out of my head. If you think it necessary to print these explanations

nations * for the use of people that have no eyes, I should be glad they were a little altered. I am, to my shame, in your debt for a long letter; but I cannot think of any thing else till you have set me at ease on this matter.

While Mr. Bentley was employed in making the Designs mentioned in the preceding letter, Mr. Gray, who greatly admired not only the elegance of his fancy, but also the neatness as well as facility of his execution, began a complimentary poem to him, which I shall now insert. Many readers will perhaps think the panegyric carried too far; as I own I did when he first shewed it me. Yet it is but justice to declare, that the original drawings, now in Mr. Walpole's possession, which I have since seen, are so infinitely superior to the published engravings of them, that a person, who has only seen the latter, can by no means judge of the excellencies of the former; Besides, there is so much of grotesque fancy in the Designs themselves, that it can be no great matter of wonder (even if the engra-

K 2

vers

N O T E.

* See the above-mentioned Designs, where the explanations here alluded to are inserted.

vers had done justice to them) that they failed to please universally. What I have said in defence of the Long Story might easily be applied to these productions of the sister art: But not to detain the reader from the perusal of a fragment, many stanzas of which are equal in poetical merit to the best in his most finished poems, I shall here only add that it was for the sake of the Design which Mr. Bentley made for the Long Story, that Mr. Gray permitted it to be printed; yet not without clearly foreseeing that he risked somewhat by the publication of it, as he intimates in the preceding letter: and indeed the event shewed his judgment to be true in this particular, as it proved the least popular of all his productions.

STANZAS to Mr. BENTLEY.

IN silent gaze the tuneful choir among,
 Half pleas'd, half blushing let the muse admire,
 While Bentley leads her sister-art along,
 And bids the pencil answer to the lyre.
 See, in their course, each transitory thought
 Fix'd by his touch a lasting essence take;
 Each dream, in fancy's airy colouring wrought,
 To local symmetry and life awake!

The

The tardy rhymes that us'd to linger on,
 To censure cold, and negligent of fame,
 In swifter measures animated run,
 And catch a lustre from his genuine flame.
 Ah ! could they catch his strength, his easy grace,
 His quick creation, his unerring line ;
 The energy of Pope they might efface,
 And Dryden's harmony submit to mine,
 But not to one in this benighted age
 Is that diviner inspiration giv'n,
 That burns in Shakespear's or in Milton's page,
 The pomp and prodigality of heav'n.
 As when conspiring in the diamond's blaze,
 The meaner gems, that singly charm the sight,
 Together dart their intermingled rays,
 And dazzle with a luxury of light.
 * Enough for me, if to some feeling breast
 My lines a secret sympathy impart ;
 And as their pleasing influence *flows confest*,
 A sigh of soft reflection *heave the heart*.

* * * *

In

N O T E.

* A corner of the only manuscript copy, which Mr. Gray
 left of this fragment, is unfortunately torn ; and though I
have

In the March following Mr. Gray lost that Mother for whom, on all occasions, we have seen he shewed so tender a regard. She was buried in the same vault where her sister's remains had been deposited more than three years before. As the inscription on the tombstone (at least the latter part of it) is undoubtedly of Mr. Gray's writing, it here would claim a place, even if it had not a peculiar pathos to recommend it, and, at the same time, a true inscriptive simplicity.

IN THE VAULT BENEATH ARE DEPOSITED,
IN HOPE OF A JOYFUL RESURRECTION,
THE REMAINS OF
MARY ANTROBUS.
SHE DIED, UNMARRIED, NOV. V. MDCCXLIX.
AGED LXVI.

IN

N O T E.

have endeavoured to supply the chasm, I am not quite satisfied with the words which I have inserted in the third line. I print my additions in italics, and shall be much pleased if any reader finds a better supplement to this imperfect stanza.

IN THE SAME PIOUS CONFIDENCE,
 BESIDE HER FRIEND AND SISTER,
 HERE SLEEP THE REMAINS OF
 DOROTHY GRAY,
 WIDOW, THE CAREFUL TENDER MOTHER
 OF MANY CHILDREN, ONE OF WHOM ALONE
 HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO SURVIVE HER.
 SHE DIED MARCH XI. MDCCLIII.
 AGED LXVII.

L E T T E R XVIII.

Mr. GRAY to Mr. MASON.

Durham, Dec. 26, 1753.

A Little while before I received your melancholy letter, I had been informed by Mr. Charles Avison of one of the sad events you mention*. I know what it is to lose persons that one's eyes and heart have

N O T E.

* The death of my Father, and of Dr. Marmaduke Prickett, a young Physician of my own age, with whom I was brought up from infancy, who died of the same infectious fever,

have long been used to; and I never desire to part with the remembrance of that loss, nor would wish you should. It is something that you had a little time to acquaint yourself with the idea before-hand; and that your Father suffered but little pain, the only thing that makes death terrible. After I have said this, I cannot help expressing my surprize at the disposition he has made of his affairs. I must (if you will suffer me to say so) call it great weakness; and yet perhaps your affliction for him is heightened by that very weakness; for I know it is possible to feel an additional sorrow for the faults of those we have loved, even where that fault has been greatly injurious to ourselves.—Let me desire you not to expose yourself to any further danger in the midst of that scene of sickness and death; but withdraw as soon as possible to some place at a little distance in the country; for I do not, in the least, like the situation you are in. I do not attempt to console you on the situation your fortune is left in; if it were far worse, the good opinion I have of you tells me, you will never the sooner do any thing mean or unworthy of yourself; and consequently I cannot pity you on this account, but I sincerely do on the new loss you have had of a good and friendly man, whose memory I honour. I have seen the scene you describe, and know how dread-
ful

ful it is : I know too I am the better for it. We are all idle and thoughtless things, and have no sense, no use in the world any longer than that sad impression lasts ; the deeper it is engraved the better.

L E T T E R X I X .

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Stoke, Sept. 18, 1754.

I Am glad you enter into the spirit of Strawberry-Castle ; it has a purity and propriety of Gothicism in it (with very few exceptions) that I have not seen elsewhere. My Lord Radnor's vagaries I see did not keep you from doing justice to his situation, which far surpasses every thing near it ; and I do not know a more laughing scene than that about Twickenham and Richmond. Dr. Akenfide, I perceive, is no conjurer in architecture ; especially when he talks of the ruins of Persepolis, which are no more Gothic than they are Chinese. The Egyptian style (see Dr. Pococke, not his discourses, but his prints) was apparently the mother of the Greek ; and there is such a similitude between the Egyptian and those Persian ruins, as gave

Diodorus

Diodorus room to affirm, that the old buildings of Persia were certainly performed by Egyptian artists : As to the other part of your friend's opinion, that the Gothic manner is the Saracen or Moorish, he has a great authority to support him, that of Sir Christopher Wren ; and yet I cannot help thinking it undoubtedly wrong. The palaces in Spain I never saw but in description, which gives us little or no idea of things ; but the Doge's palace at Venice I have seen, which is in the Arabesque manner : And the houses of Barbary you may see in Dr. Shaw's book, not to mention abundance of other Eastern buildings in Turkey, Persia, &c. that we have views of ; and they seem plainly to be corruptions of the Greek architecture, broke into little parts indeed, and covered with little ornaments, but in a taste very distinguishable from that which we call Gothic. There is one thing that runs through the Moorish buildings that an imitator would certainly have been first struck with, and would have tried to copy ; and that is the cupolas which cover every thing, baths, apartments, and even kitchens ; yet who ever saw a Gothic cupola ? It is a thing plainly of Greek original. I do not see any thing but the slender spires that serve for steeples, which may perhaps be borrowed from the Saracen minarets on their mosques.

I take it ill you should say any thing against the Mole, it is a reflexion I see cast at the Thames. Do you think that rivers, which have lived in London and its neighbourhood all their days, will run roaring and tumbling about like your tramontane torrents in the North? No, they only glide and whisper.

L E T T E R XX.

Mr. GRAY to Dr. WHARTON.

Cambridge, March 9, 1755.

I Do not pretend to humble any one's pride; I love my own too well to attempt it. As to mortifying their vanity, it is too easy and too mean a task for me to delight in. You are very good in shewing so much sensibility on my account; but be assured my taste for praise is not like that of children for fruit; if there were nothing but medlars and black-berries in the world, I could be very well content to go without any at all. I dare say that Mason, though some years younger than I, was as little elevated with the approbation of Lord * and Lord *, as I am mortified by their silence.

With

With regard to publishing, I am not so much against the thing itself, as of publishing this Ode alone †. I have two or three ideas more in my head; what is to come of them? Must they too come out in the shape of little sixpenny flams, dropping one after another till Mr. Doddsley thinks fit to collect them with Mr. This's Song, and Mr. Tother's Epigram, into a pretty volume? I am sure Mason must be sensible of this, and therefore cannot mean what he says; neither am I quite of your opinion with regard to strophe and antistrophe*; setting

N O T E S,

† His Ode on the Progress of Poetry.

* He often made the same remark to me in conversation, which led me to form the last Ode of Caractacus in shorter stanzas: But we must not imagine that he thought the regular Pindaric method without its use; though, as he justly says, when formed in long stanzas, it does not fully succeed in point of effect on the ear: For there was nothing which he more disliked than that chain of irregular stanzas which Cowley introduced, and falsely called Pindaric; and which from the extreme facility of execution produced a number of miserable imitators. Had the regular return of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode no other merit than that of extreme difficulty, it ought, on this very account, to be valued; because

setting aside the difficulty of execution, methinks it has little or no effect on the ear, which scarce perceives the regular return of metres at so great a distance from one another : to make it succeed, I am persuaded the stanzas must not consist of above nine lines each at the most. Pindar has several such Odes.

Mr. Gray intimates, in the foregoing letter, that he had two or three more lyrical ideas in his head : One of these was the BARD, the exordium of which was at this time finished ; I say finished, because his conceptions, as well as his manner of disposing them, were so singularly exact, that he had seldom occasion to make many, except verbal emendations, after he had first committed his lines to paper. It was never his method to sketch his general design in careless verse † ; he always

N O T E.

cause we well know that " Easy writing is no easy reading." It is also to be remarked, that Mr. Congreve, who (though without any lyrical powers) first introduced the regular Pindaric form into the English language, made use of the short stanzas which Mr. Gray here recommends.—See his Ode to the Queen: Works, vol. III. p. 438, Ed. Birm.

† I have many of his critical letters by me on my own compositions : Letters which, though they would not much amuse

ways finished as he proceeded; this, though it made his execution slow, made his compositions more perfect. I think, however, that this method was only calculated to produce such short works as generally employed

N O T E.

amuse the public in general, contain excellent lessons for young poets; from one of these I extract the following passage, which seems to explain this matter more fully: "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry: This I have always aimed at, and never could attain. The necessity of rhyming is one great obstacle to it: Another, and perhaps a stronger, is that way you have chosen, of casting down your first thoughts carelessly and at large, and then clipping them here and there at leisure. This method, after all possible pains, will leave behind it a laxity, a diffuseness. The frame of a thought, (otherwise well-invented, well-turned, and well-placed) is often weakened by it. Do I talk nonsense? Or do you understand me? I am persuaded what I say is true in my head, whatever it may be in prose; for I do not pretend to write prose." Nothing can be more just than this remark: Yet, as I say above, it is a mode of writing which is only calculated for smaller compositions: But Mr. Gray, though he applied it here to an Ode, was apt to think it a general rule. Now if an epic or dramatic poet were to resolve

ployed his poetical pen; and that from pursuing it, he grew tired of his larger designs before he had completed them. The fact seems to justify my opinion. But my principal reason for mentioning this at

N O T E.

solve to finish every part of his work as highly as we have seen Mr. Gray laboured his first scene of Agrippina, I am apt to think he would tire of it as soon as our Author did; for in the course of so multifarious a work, he would find himself obliged to expunge some of the best written parts, in order to preserve the unity of the whole. I know only one way to prevent this, and that was the method which Racine followed; who (as his son tells us, in that amusing life, though much zested with bigotry, which he has given us of his father) when he began a drama, disposed every part of it accurately in prose; and when he had connected all the scenes together, used to say, "*Ma Tragedie est faite.*" (See *La Vie de Jean Racine*, p. 117. See also his son's other works, tom. 2d, for a specimen in the first act of the *Iphigenia in Tauris*.) M. Racine, it seems, was an easy versifier in a language in which, they say, it is more difficult than in ours to versify. It certainly is so with regard to dramatic compositions. I am on this account persuaded, that if the great Poet had written in English, he would have drawn out his first sketches, not in prose, but in careless blank verse; yet this I give as mere matter of opinion.

at present, is to explain the cause why I have not been scrupulous in publishing so many of his fragments in the course of these Memoirs. It would have been unpardonable in me to have taken this liberty with a deceased friend, had I not found his lines, as far as they went, nearly as highly finished as they would have been, when completed: if I am mistaken in this, I hope the reader will rather impute it to a defect in my own Judgment, than a want of respect to Mr. Gray's Memory.

This consideration, however, emboldens me to print the following fragment of an Ode in this place, which was unquestionably another of the ideas alluded to in the preceding letter: Since I find in his memorandum-book, of the preceding year 1754, a sketch of his design as follows: "Contrast between the winter past
 "and coming spring.—Joy owing to that vicissitude.—
 "Many who never feel that delight.—Sloth.—Envy.
 "Ambition. How much happier the rustic who feels
 "it, though he knows not how." I print this careless note, in order that the reader may conceive the intended arrangement of the whole; who, I doubt not, will, on perusing the following beautiful stanzas, lament with me that he left it incomplete; nor will it console him
 for

for the loss, if I tell him that I have had the boldness to attempt to finish it myself, making use of some other lines and broken stanzas which he had written: But as my aim in undertaking this difficult task was merely to elucidate the Poet's general meaning, I did not think that my additions were worthy to be inserted in this place; they have found a more fit situation by being thrown amongst those notes which I have put at the end of his Poems.

O D E.

NOW the golden Morn aloft
 Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
 With vermil cheek, and whisper soft
 She wooes the tardy Spring:
 Till April starts, and calls around
 The sleeping fragrance from the ground;
 And lightly o'er the living scene
 Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
 Frisking ply their feeble feet;
 Forgetful of their wintry trance
 The birds his presence greet:

But chief, the Sky-Lark warbles high
His trembling thrilling extacy ;
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

Yesterday the fullen year
Saw the snowy whirlwind fly ;
Mute was the music of the air,
The herd stood drooping by :
Their raptures now that wildly flow,
No yesterday, nor morrow know ;
'Tis man alone that joy describes
With forward, and reverted eyes.

Smiles on past Misfortune's brow,
Soft Reflection's hand can trace ;
And o'er the cheek of Sorrow throw
A melancholy grace :
While hope prolongs our happier hour ;
Or deepest shades, that dimly lower
And blacken round our weary way,
Gilds with a gleam of distant day.

Still, where rosy Pleasure leads,
See a kindred Grief pursue ;

Behind

Behind the steps that Misery treads
Approaching Comfort view :
The hues of bliss more brightly glow,
Chastis'd by sabler tints of woe ;
And blended form, with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.

See the Wretch, that long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe, and walk again :
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To Him are opening Paradise.

* * * *

A third of these ideas I find in his common-place book, on the same page with his argument for the BARD †. I do not believe that he ever even began to compose the Ode itself ; but the thought is as follows :

“ All that men of power can do for men of genius is
“ to leave them at their liberty, compared to birds that,

L 2

when

N O T E.

† I have inserted this, with some remarks upon it, in my additional notes to his Poems.

“when confined to a cage, do but regret the loss of
 “their freedom in melancholy strains, and lose the
 “luscious wildness and happy luxuriance of their notes,
 “which used to make the woods resound.”

Those, who are conversant in the arrangement of a lyrical composition, will easily perceive, from this short argument, that the Ode would have opened with the simile; which, when adorned with those *thoughts that breathe and words that burn*, that Mr. Gray's muse could so richly supply, would have been at once a fine exordium, and at the same time a natural introduction to the truth he meant to impress. This, however, could hardly have been done without some little aid borrowed from satire: For however true his proposition may be, that “all that men of power can do for men of genius is to leave them at their liberty;” or, as I should put it, “that their best patronage signifies nothing if it abridges them of that liberty;” yet the fact is, that neither of the parties are convinced of this truth till they have tried the experiment, and find some reason or other (no matter whether good or bad) to think they had better never have tried it. Mons. d'Alembert, who has written an excellent essay on this subject, which Mr. Gray greatly admired, and which perhaps gave him

him the first idea of this intended Ode, puts one of the more common of these reasons in so lively a manner, that it may not be amiss here to insert it.

“ Parmi les grands Seigneurs les plus affables il en
 “ est peu qui se depouillent avec des Gens de lettres de
 “ leur grandeur, vraie ou pretendue, jusqu’ au point
 “ de l’oublier tout-a-fait. C’est ce qu’on apperçoit sur
 “ tout dans les conversations, où l’on n’est pas de leur
 “ avis. Il semble qu’a mesure que l’Homme d’Esprit
 “ s’eclipse, l’Homme de Qualité se montre ; et paroisse
 “ exiger la deference dont l’Homme d’Esprit avoit com-
 “ mencé par dispenser. Aussi le commerce intime des
 “ Grands avec les Gens de lettres ne finit que trop
 “ souvent par quelque rupture eclatante ; rupture qui
 “ vient presque toujours de l’oubli des regards reci-
 “ proques auxquelles on a manqué de part ou d’autre,
 “ peut etre même des deux côtés *.” However, I
 think a man of letters ought to have other reasons be-
 sides this for breaking such a connection after it has
 been once formed.

I

N O T E.

* Essai sur la Societé des Grands, avec les Gens de Let-
 tres ; “ Melanges de Litterature & Philosophie,” tom. 2d,
 p. 134.

I have now given the reader the best account in my power of what our Author's unfinished lyrical ideas consisted: I believe they are all that he in any sort committed to paper, and probably those which he immediately alluded to in the preceding letter.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

20 AU 66